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SWIMMING



BY

MARTIN AND J. RACSTER COBBETT.

WITH SIXTY ILLUSTRATIONS.



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64

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY ...	1
II. TIME AND PLACE ...	2
III. FLOATING <i>the same as walking</i> ...	4
IV. PARLOUR PRACTICE <i>(the same as walking)</i> ...	8
V. ARTIFICIAL AIDS <i>the same as walking</i> ...	12
VI. THE KICK ...	17
VII. THE ARM ACTION ...	21
VIII. THE BREAST STROKE ...	23
IX. THE SIDE STROKE ...	27
X. THE RACING STROKE ...	32
XI. SWIMMING ON THE BACK ...	34
XII. HAND-OVER-HAND SWIMMING ...	37
XIII. TRICKS ...	38
XIV. PLUNGING AND DIVING ...	43
XV. BATH SWIMMING ...	51
XVI. CAUTIONS ...	57
XVII. SEA-BATHING ...	58
APPENDIX. ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY'S DIRECTIONS	62



SWIMMING.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

ALMOST every animal except man can swim naturally on finding itself in the water for the first time, and for these reasons : its position is nearly, if not quite the same as on *terra firma* ; the action of the limbs is almost identical with that employed in walking, while its barrel-like body, large in proportion to its head and legs, serves as a buoy to keep it afloat. The physical structure of man, the lord of creation, is not so favourably adapted for his making his way through the water, his head being much heavier in proportion to its size, than his trunk, while he has to make an entirely new departure, in abandoning his customary erect position, and has to adopt movements of the limbs to which he has previously been unaccustomed. Still, the specific gravity of the human body (particularly when the cavity of the chest is filled with air) is lighter than that of water, in proportion to the obesity of the individual, stout people being able to float more easily than those of spare habit.

Instances are on record in which some specially favoured individuals, heaven-born water-dogs, have developed sur-

prising natatory talent at the first time of asking ; but these brilliant exceptions are too few and far between to point the moral that swimming comes naturally to man, for if some little pains and trouble were not requisite to master this most useful of accomplishments we should read or speak no longer of the *art* of swimming. In acquiring this art—and it is not difficult of attainment—the disciple must learn to look upon his body as a boat, for the propulsion of which nature has given him a double pair of sculls, viz., his arms and legs, on the proper use of which his progress through the water depends. Too much attention cannot at the outset be devoted to the acquirement of a good *style*, a bad habit being afterwards difficult to correct. Style and pace, as a rule, go hand in hand, and the contrast between the graceful yet powerful sweep of the practised oarsman with the clumsy splashings of the neophyte is not more striking than that between the respective modes of progression of a good and an indifferent swimmer.

CHAPTER II.

TIME AND PLACE.

BEFORE endeavouring to put our readers “in the swim,” a few words may be permitted as to the choice of time and place for bathing.

In the good old days, the bather, on waking from his slumbers, used to partially dress himself, and, carrying the minor accessories of his toilet in his towel, straightway betake himself to the beach or river’s brink at a very early hour in the morning. Some constitutions can stand this sort of thing, nay, may be even benefited thereby ; but, on the other hand, and particularly in the case of growing boys,

this bathing before breakfast has anything but the invigorating effect it is expected to produce. It leaves behind instead a feeling of lassitude and weariness, which lasts generally until midday and perhaps all day.

Unquestionably, the best time to *enjoy* a swim is between the hours of ten and two o'clock, some hour and a half after breakfast, or half-way between that meal and dinner, when the sun's power is at its height. Opportunity, however, does not always serve, as the demands of "the mill, Mr. Jonas, the mill" are imperative, and to those whose time is occupied at this period of the day I would recommend the *evening* in preference to the early morn, a bathe before supper sending one home with a healthy appetite and a soothed nervous system, which predisposes to a sound night's rest. Remember, *never* to attempt to enter the water directly after eating a hearty meal, but there is no harm in bathing after eating a crust or biscuit; and should the system be fatigued by previous exertion or want of proper rest, forego your outdoor bath in favour of a hot "tub" indoors. I have seen bathers arrive in what is vulgarly known as a muck-sweat, peel off their clothes, and calmly wait to get *cool* before entering the water. A greater mistake cannot be made, as a thorough chill is the infallible result, chattering teeth and shaking fingers attesting this fact during the process of dressing. I have never found the slightest inconvenience from plunging in "hissing hot;" in fact, the body seems to retain its caloric for a longer period. owing to the accelerated action of the heart, and a comfortable glow then succeeds the process of drying.

The sea offers advantages to the learner which he can obtain nowhere else, as, in addition to its being of higher temperature than fresh water during the summer months, its gradually shelving sands afford him a smooth, firm footing,

free from the objectionable *débris* which somehow works its way into the river's bed. In pond, river, or canal, assure yourself as to the depth, and beware of holes, weeds, and swift current, while, if possible, the bottom should be gravel.

What says the poet?—

“Cheered by a milder beam, the sprightly youth
Speeds to some well known pool, whose crystal depth
A sandy bottom shews.”

Years ago the big inland towns could boast of but few advantages in the shape of baths, but of late “we have changed all that,” and in London particularly *Alumnus* can take his choice of a dozen or more well-appointed establishments, within easy access, where competent professors may be found to put him through his facings.

It is, however, with the view of making “every man his own instructor” that the following hints are offered, so now for the first lesson.

CHAPTER III.

FLOATING.

As you cannot yet plunge in *secundum artem*, remember to immerse the whole body (head and all) as quickly as possible, or duck, or throw the water over you with your hands. The sensation produced by a slow “wade” from the shore until the gradually deepening water reaches your chest will make you gasp again, so either “flop” in feet first, or rush in and fall down when you arrive “knee deep.”

The first thing requisite is confidence. You have been *told* that your body will float, but you want to be sure of that fact for yourself. Two bathers in company can learn to swim more quickly, as one assists and gives confidence to

the other ; but if your friend is already a swimmer, so much the better for you.

Having got used to the feel of it, you can satisfy yourself as to the sustaining power of the water as follows :—

With your back to the shore and the water almost up to the armpits, bend your knees till the water nearly reaches the chin (Fig. 1). Then gradually throw your head back as far as it will go, until the base of the skull is immersed and the water covers your ears. Now

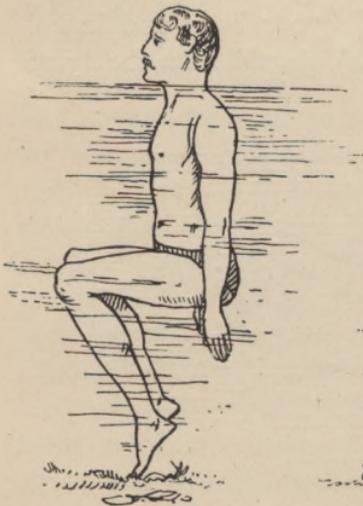


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

steal your arms backwards behind your head, at their fullest extent, the palms uppermost and slightly hollowed. Take a full breath, and swelling out the chest, give a little push off the bottom with both feet (Fig. 2). Keep your mouth shut, as, perhaps, for an instant *only*, the water will ripple on your face as the head takes its position, and then you will find your legs, which must now be stiffened and separated

slightly, gradually rising until the tips of your fingers, toes, and knees, and your chest and face will be clear of the water (Fig. 3). The head must be thrown well back, as this



Fig. 3.

elevates the mouth and chin, while your body and limbs, lazily balancing in the water (Fig. 4), should form the figure

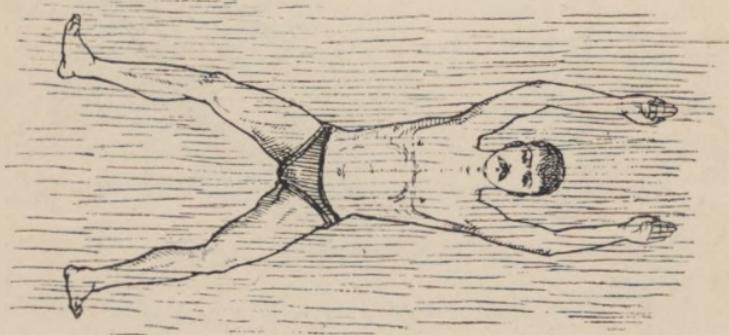


Fig. 4 (seen from above).

of St. Andrew's Cross. If a friend will place a light supporting hand under the small of your back as you try this experiment, removing it when you have settled into position, you will find your confidence increased.

Boys, from the lightness of their bones, and individuals who have acquired plenty of adipose tissue, have little difficulty in "lying dead man." I have known, however,

many young athletes, all muscle and sinew, who couldn't for the life of them accomplish this simple feat; and it's a very common thing to hear a good swimmer say, "I can't float; my legs will sink!"

Another capital dodge is that recommended by Dr. Franklin, in which the buoyant power of water is still more strikingly exemplified. Procure an egg or lump of chalk of an easily handled shape, and, when the water is up to your chest, face the shore, and let the egg drop in front of you. Now take breath, shut your mouth, but not your eyes, which you can open and shut as easily in the water as out, duck under, and try to pick up the egg. You will find that while your legs rise from the bottom you will have to struggle with your arms to get *down* far enough to reach the "egg," owing to the great resistance offered by the water, and two or three attempts may be necessary to accomplish your object. You can come up at any moment by depressing the feet, and, as you face the shore, your struggles are working you into shallower water, so that the experiment is a safe one enough.

You have now gained confidence, which is half the battle, and the next thing to be done is to try to move on the surface of that element which you have proved capable of sustaining you when motionless.

It is certainly easier to float when the body is moving through the water than when it is stationary, on much the same principle which sustains the oyster-shell that skips along the surface of the sea, until, the impetus given it by the thrower being exhausted, it sinks to the bottom. In like manner the pace acquired in swimming helps to sustain the body.

Exercise number 5

CHAPTER IV.

PARLOUR PRACTICE.

MILITARY men will tell you that it takes years to produce a perfect soldier, the recruit having to be licked into shape in a probationary period of goose-step and manual drill before learning how to handle a rifle. A good swimmer can be turned out in much less time; but he, too, will progress towards perfection much more rapidly according to his grounding in the arm and leg drill of the art. As in the winter few baths are open, while the coldness of open water puts a stopper on outdoor bathing, the neophyte may then benefit by a few exercises or practices. Such a knowledge

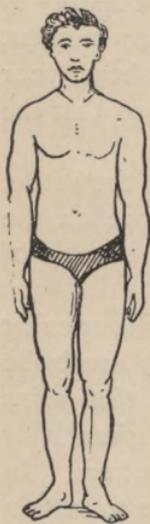


Fig. 5.

of the strokes as can be obtained by what may be termed "parlour practice," will smooth the way for their performance in the water, besides accustoming the muscles to the special actions they will be called upon to perform. This knowledge, too, may be obtained with little trouble and no outlay, as the beginner can take a spell at swimming drill before dressing in the morning or retiring for the night. He cannot have healthier exercise before or after the matutinal tub. In mastering the breast stroke you acquire the open sesame to the situation. We will call the first movements "the arm stroke in the air." Stand square to the front, facing a looking-glass, if possible, hands at the sides, and heels touching (Fig. 5).

1. Join the hands, palms inwards, fingers and thumbs together, and raise both *fore* arms until the

elbows press against the bottom ribs, while the finger tips, meeting in a supplicating attitude, are on a level with the collar-bone (Fig. 6).

2. Shoot the arms forward to their fullest extent in line with the shoulders, so that they form a right angle with the body, the palms of the hands and balls of the thumbs being always pressed together, and the fingers kept closed (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7.

3. By a twist of the wrist, turn the thumbs down until the backs of the hands incline inwards at an angle of forty-five degrees, the little finger edge uppermost, keeping the hands slightly hollowed, fingers and thumbs compressed; the execution of this movement will separate the hands (Fig. 8).

4. Sweep the arms back in line with the

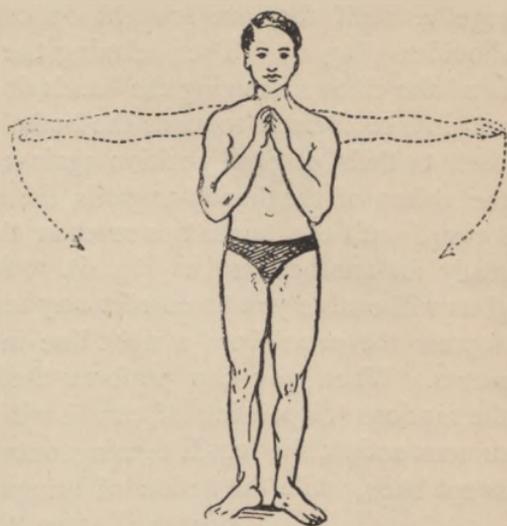


Fig. 6.

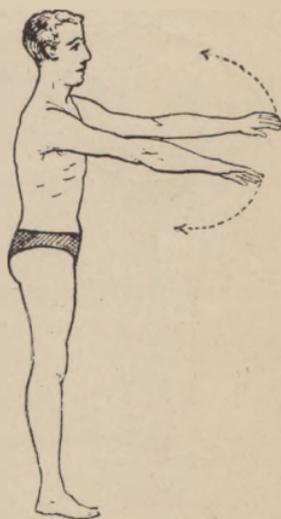


Fig. 8.

shoulder, elbows stiff, hands at the same angle, fingers together until they are brought opposite the points of the shoulders (Fig. 6), Then relaxing the muscles of the arms, bend the elbows, drawing the hands downwards and inwards, and in a semi-circle towards the body. As the elbows come back to their original position against the bottom ribs, turn the palms of the hands towards the sides, and steal them forward until the finger tips meet in their original position, ready for another stroke (Fig. 6). Your reflection in the glass will enable you to correct any tendency to elevate or depress the arms from a right line in making these movements. When you can perform them correctly, combine the motions (dispensing of course with Fig. 5) in one continuous action, the hands turning outwards as the arms are swept back, while the action of bringing the elbows to the sides will turn them naturally palms inwards, into position again.

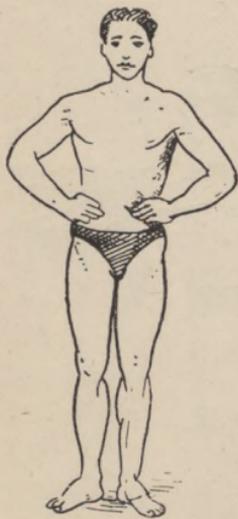


Fig. 9.

Leg action on *terra firma* (as represented by the flooring) is not so easy to imitate successfully, as, in addition to having to sustain the weight of the body, the feet have to overcome the resistance offered by the carpet.

Take up position as before, except that the hands must be placed on the hips (Fig. 9).

1. Open the knees, which must be turned out to their fullest extent, and sink down as far as possible, raising the heels, which must be kept as closely as possible together. A little practice will enable you to preserve your balance, as you adopt the position shown in the accompanying figure

(Fig. 10), which comes as near as possible to the attitude assumed by the legs when drawn up for the kick in the water.

2. Spring up from the ball of the foot, and as the body



Fig. 10.

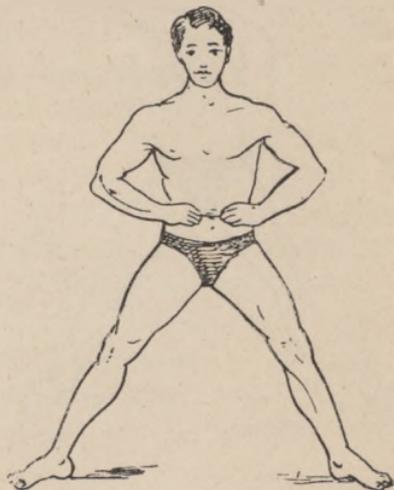


Fig. 11.

assumes the erect position, straighten the knees at the same time with a slight spring, planting the feet right and left as far apart as possible (Fig. 11). The impetus given in the water would be sufficient to bring the legs together as you progressed through it, but on dry ground it will need a slight spring off the toes to close them again as in the first position (Fig. 9).

Having mastered these movements, you must now go in for combining the arm and leg actions, thus: (1) Shoot out the arms as in Fig. 7, and, keeping the body rigid, sweep them backwards (Fig. 6). (2) As the elbows approach the sides, open the knees, keeping the body erect, and while sinking down let the hands steal into position under the

chin. (3) Keeping the elbows bent, straighten and separate the legs (Fig. 12), and then as you bring the feet together,



Fig. 12.

shoot out the arms to the front, palms touching, which will bring you again into the position of Fig. 7.

When you are proficient in these combined movements, try them with a pair of light dumb-bells, some twenty times at a stretch, counting steadily, "one, two," etc., to yourself, as you work, and keeping sedulously to the directions, so as not to slur or get the various actions out of turn.

CHAPTER V.

ARTIFICIAL AIDS.

IN the course of a long experience, I have *never* known any ultimate benefit to accrue from the use of supports in the shape of cork belts or bladders. All very well in their way in a bath, they are positively dangerous in open water, as a learner can insensibly float out of his depth; while, when employing them, he is content to *lark* about and learns little or nothing, and the little he does know becomes of no use to him when the "floats" are discarded. By far the best way to support the body while acquiring the proper action, which, though rather awkward at first, will soon come quite naturally to you, is to procure a

girdle of webbing at any saddler's shop, some five or six inches wide, which should, by strap and buckle, be fastened round the chest and kept well up under the armpits by two bands over the shoulders. Attached to this belt is a cord which runs through an eye at right angles to the top of a pole some six feet long, the butt end of which, together with the slack of the cord, is held by a friend stationed on the bank or in a boat, who is thus enabled to "play" the swimmer so as to keep his body on the surface of the water. As the learner improves, his mentor can insensibly relax the strain on the cord, until the pupil finds to his joy that he has actually been keeping himself afloat by his own exertions, and, almost before he is aware of the fact, has begun to swim.

It is to be presumed that your coach is qualified for his office; but should he be only competent to the task of keeping you afloat, your previous "parlour practice" will render you almost independent of all but the support afforded by the rod.

The body's position in the water, though necessarily horizontal, will make no difference to the action of the arms as far as concerns their relative positions to the shoulders, and the legs will follow as before in the plane of the trunk, as it rests in the water.

My readers who have already taken the trouble to acquire the stroke, and understand the positions of the hands, arms, and legs, must excuse amplification in these directions, in fact, may skip what follows regarding it. The trunk should be nicely hollowed, and the head thrown back until the chin rests on the water. Keeping the legs together, knees and ankles touching, and toes pointing towards the rear, join the palms of the hands, the fingers of each being pressed together, and the inside of the thumbs resting against the outer edge of the first joint of the forefingers.

1. Extend both arms to the front to their fullest extent, keeping them on a level with the shoulders, and not allowing any part of the hand or arm to show above the surface (Fig. 13).

2. Slightly hollowing the palms, turn the wrists inwards until *the knuckles at the root of each forefinger touch*, which will bring the backs of the hands into the proper position,

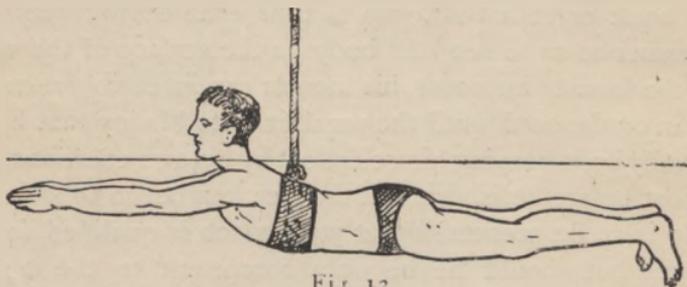


Fig. 13

at an angle of forty-five degrees, the thumbs being hidden from sight.

3. Keeping the arms extended, sweep them slowly outwards and backwards until each hand is opposite the points

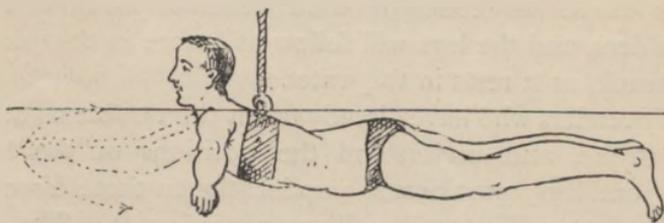


Fig. 14.

of the shoulder at a right angle to the body, the stroke being made at the same even depth under water (Fig. 14).

4. Do not separate the fingers, but pressing the hands inwards and slightly downwards, bend and draw in the elbows, a movement which will naturally turn the palms of

the hands inwards as they circle towards the breasts, and as the elbows touch the sides let the tips of the fingers, pointed forwards, come together under the chin, thus completing the arm stroke (Fig. 15).

Remember not to separate the fingers, but keep them well together, while the hand should be scoop-like. Each

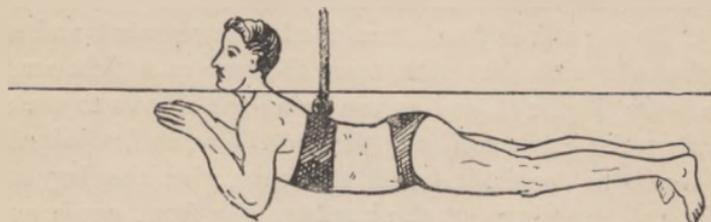


Fig. 15.

movement should be made slowly, reaching as far as possible so as to embrace the greatest area of water, while the legs must be kept stiff and motionless. After a little practice you will find yourself almost imperceptibly travelling forwards, and may attempt to bring the legs into play.

1. Shooting out the hands, as in Fig. 13, bend both knees

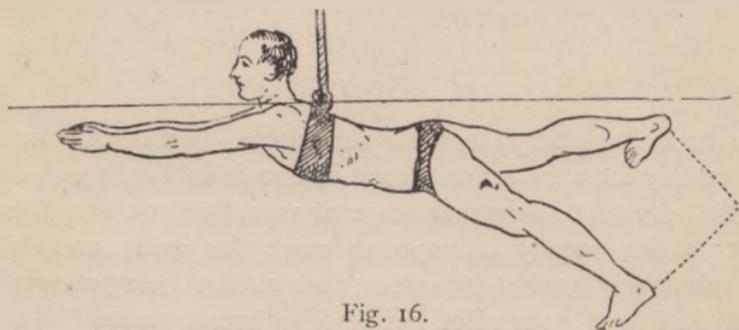


Fig. 16.

and draw them well under the body, keeping the heels close together, with the toes turned outwards and upwards.

2. Keeping the feet turned outwards, open the legs as wide as possible with a vigorous kick, which will straighten both knees, the legs sweeping backwards like a pair of compasses as widely separated as possible (Fig. 16).

Your kick is half completed ; now without pause continue the backward sweep of the legs, until they come together at their full length, toes to the rear (Fig. 13).

3. As the ankles touch turn the hands outwards and strike backwards with the arms, until they are at a right angle to the body (Fig. 14), and as you bring the elbows to the sides draw up the legs again as in the *dotted line*, and, *while gliding the hands* to the front under the chin, give the leg stroke (Fig. 17), shooting out the hands to the front again as the

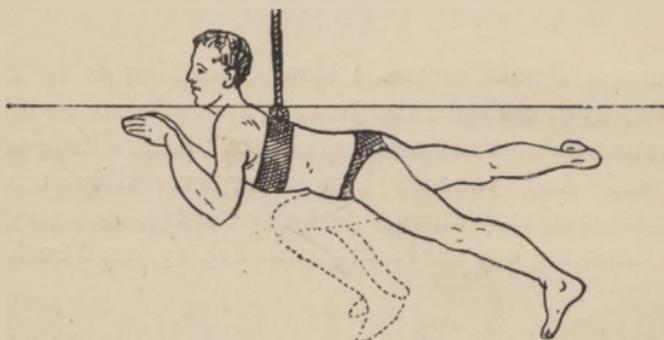


Fig. 17.

legs touching complete their semicircle. This will leave you ready for a fresh arm stroke as shown in Fig. 13.

You are now, as the drill-sergeant says, "as you were," and after a few steady attempts to work the arms and legs harmoniously *against* each other, their strokes being *alternate*, will find that your pilot has had to break ground to the front, a proof that you are getting on.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KICK.

WHILE the arms and legs alike do their share in the propulsion of the body, the legs perform by far the most important work, and the importance of a good "kick" cannot be too strongly urged. Though the action of the soles of the feet upon the water helps the "drive," the momentum is also given by the "wedge" of water embraced and driven backwards by the action of the backs of the thighs and calves, as they almost come together at the completion of the leg stroke. Hence, the wider the stretch the more powerful the "drive," and the beginner should try to rival as closely as possible that acrobatic performance known as "the splits" when trying to master the kick. The action of arms and legs is *alternate*; that is to say, when the legs are making their sweep, the arms are thrown forward to their fullest extent, thus helping to sustain the upper part of the trunk, and serving as a prow or cutwater; then, during the first part of the arm stroke, the legs, almost touching after finishing their work, remain stiff and extended, so as to offer as little resistance as possible. These positions are but momentary, but their rigid observance is necessary to ensure pace with the least expenditure of force.

As every one is not fortunate enough to command assistance, I will, at the risk of going over some beaten ground, hark back, and throw out a few hints for the benefit of the neophyte who has to shift for himself.

Running round the sides of the bath, a little above the level of the surface of the water, you will generally find a cord secured through rings, or a rod to which you can hold

on ; but if you are making your unassisted initiatory essay in the open fresh or salt, you must either grasp the bank or commence in sufficient depth of water for the palms of your hands to press against the bottom when the arms are extended downwards.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that you are commencing operations in a bath. Standing with heels nearly touching, grasp the rope in both hands, which should be opposite the points of the shoulders, knuckles upwards, and slightly bend the elbows. The arms must now be kept stiff. Hollow your back, and, raising the feet from

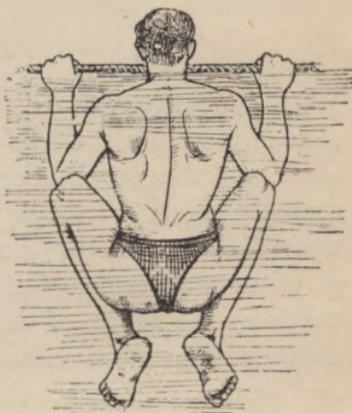


Fig. 18 (from above).

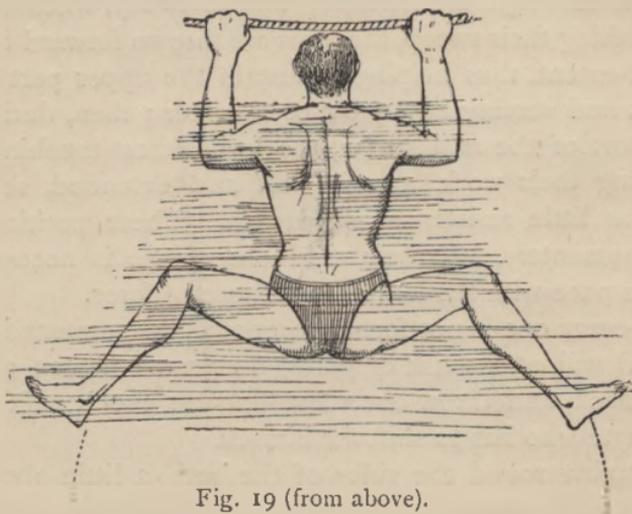


Fig. 19 (from above).

the ground, bend both knees, and draw them well under the

body (Fig. 18). This and the following diagrams give the positions *as seen from above*.

This action, you will find, will cause you to *pull* on your hands, the forward motion of the knees sending the body backwards.

Now, with a smart kick, open the legs to the highest and widest extent, at the same time depressing the heels, contracting the toes upwards, and turning both feet at a right angle, spread-eagle fashion (Fig. 19). Describing as complete a semi-circle as possible with each leg, you will find the toes gradually drop as the feet reach their furthest point of separation (Fig. 20), and as, continuing the backward

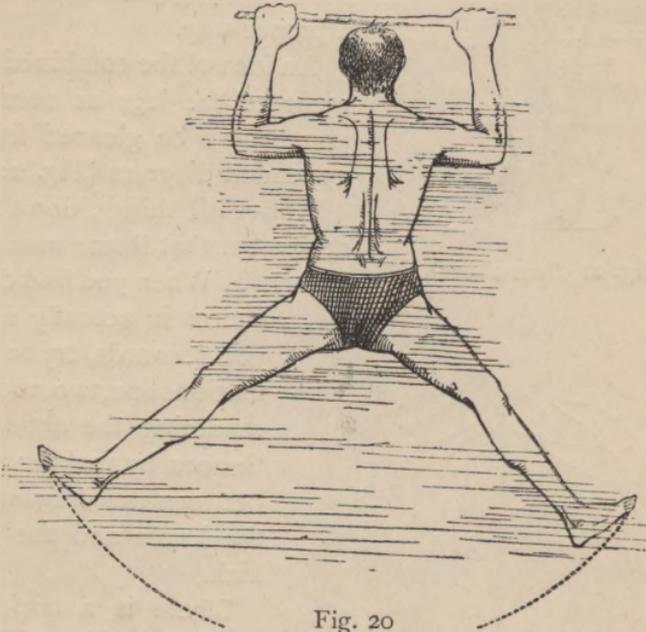


Fig. 20
(from above).

circular motion, the stiffly *extended* legs almost touch at the completion of the stroke in a right line with the body, the

toes should point to the rear (Fig. 21). Don't hump up

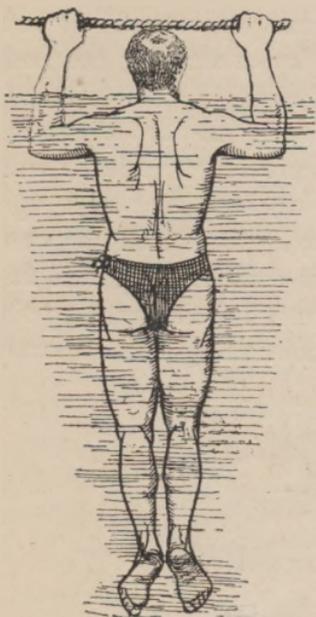


Fig. 21 (from above).

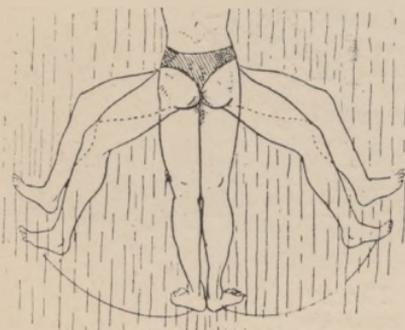


Fig. 22.

your back, as you will find a strong inclination to do, and remember that you want to drive the body *forward*, and not *out* of the water. Drop your feet on the bottom, and repeat their action quietly, without haste, until you find that in making the stroke you have to push against the rope, bank, or bottom, with the hands, to resist the impetus—a sign that the legs are beginning to do their work in a proper way.

An idea of the combined movement of the legs as seen from above may be gleaned from the appended diagram (Fig. 22).

Above all things, don't hurry; remember that Rome wasn't built in a day. When you find that the action is actually sending you forwards, try to blend motions one, two, and three, rendering the action continuous by making no halt between the drawing up of the knees and the perfect kick.

There is a trick about the latter which will come with practice, and I will try to explain it by a familiar simile. Everybody knows the

difference between a "bowl" and a throw ; in the first the arm being kept rigid, while in the second a certain twist of forearm and wrist gives extra impetus to the delivery. So in swimming, you will, with practice, acquire a somewhat similar action of the knee in straightening the leg, which will give an extra flip to the stroke if you, so to speak, commence it before the knees have actually reached their highest point. As the legs are drawn up, accelerate their action, and straighten them out with a jerk, their rapid bending being, in fact, the commencement of the stroke, while their equally rapid straightening again will ensure the proper drive with which they should come together again.

The movement of the hands is a much simpler affair ; but here you must recollect, as in sculling, that directly the arms, in their sweep, get behind the *rowlock*, i.e. the point of the shoulder, their propelling power is nearly exhausted. The fingers and thumb should be kept close and the palms slightly hollowed, as it is a mark of carelessness when the hands are used with the fingers separated.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARM ACTION.

WITH the water on a level with your shoulders, stretch both arms to the fullest extent to the front, making the hands as scoop-like as possible, fingers together, knuckles upwards (Fig. 23). You will find that an angle of forty-five degrees to the plane of the surface is the best position for the "blades" of these natural sculls, which is attained by twisting the wrists inwards until the two forefingers touch-

ing conceal the thumbs, the backs of the hands inclining towards each other. When swept backwards in this position, they sustain the head and shoulders at their proper elevation, at the same time taking as much

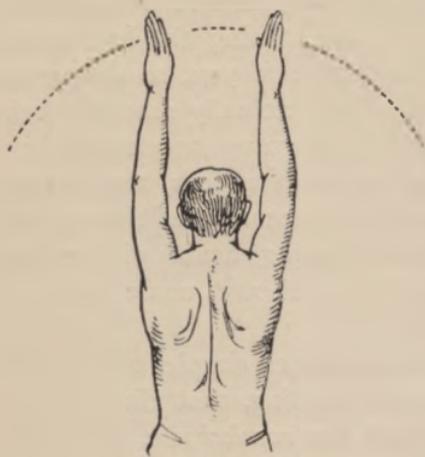


Fig. 23.

grip of the water as possible. Next separate the arms, pressing them back, still at their fullest extent (Fig. 24), until they are almost at a right angle to the body, when the elbows should gradually bend until they close on the sides, and the hands, with a twist inwards, the thumb uppermost, be brought under each breast, which the root

of the cushions of the thumbs will touch (Fig. 25). From this

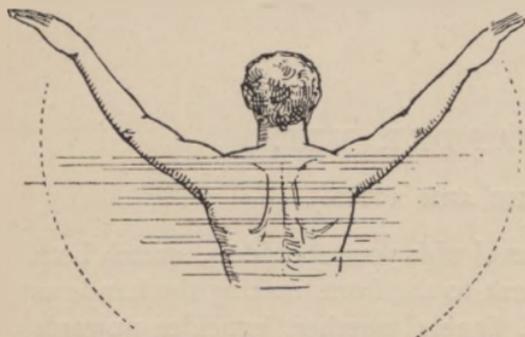


Fig. 24.



· Fig. 25.

point thrust them again smartly forwards, turning their outside edges gradually upwards, until, when they meet at their

fullest extent to commence another stroke, they again rest at the old angle of forty-five degrees.

To illustrate the motions by diagrams is a somewhat difficult matter; but the accompanying sketch (Fig. 26), gives a good idea of the motion of the arm stroke, as seen from above.

Were you to carry the hands as far back as the thighs, the head would dip, and the recovery would retard your progress to almost the same extent as the *stroke* had advanced it. *Never let the hands pass behind the bend of the elbow.* Remember to keep the



Fig. 26.

stroke about an inch under water, except when the hands steal forward again from the sides of the chest, when they rest almost on the surface.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BREAST STROKE.

HAVING become master of these two movements, you will find their combination a very easy matter. With the water a little deeper than your breast, bring your hands together on the surface, thumbs and fingers closed, palms downward and slightly hollowed, in front of your chest, the elbows touching the sides (Fig. 27). Give a vigorous push off the bottom with both feet (which must be kept together),

at the same time shooting the hands forwards to their fullest extent (Fig. 28). Now sweep both arms slowly backwards until, completing their segment of a circle, the hands are opposite the points of the shoulders, sustaining the forward motion, and as the elbows begin to bend, and the hands with the palms turning inwards are circling towards their taking-off positions, draw up the knees well under the body (Fig. 29). As the legs come into this position, your hands will have met under the chin in front of the breast, the palms being together, fingers touching and pointed forwards. Without a pause, kick the legs as far apart as possible by straightening the knees, *as the feet, completing their action,*

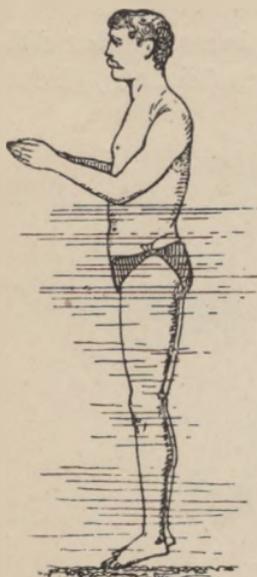


Fig. 27.

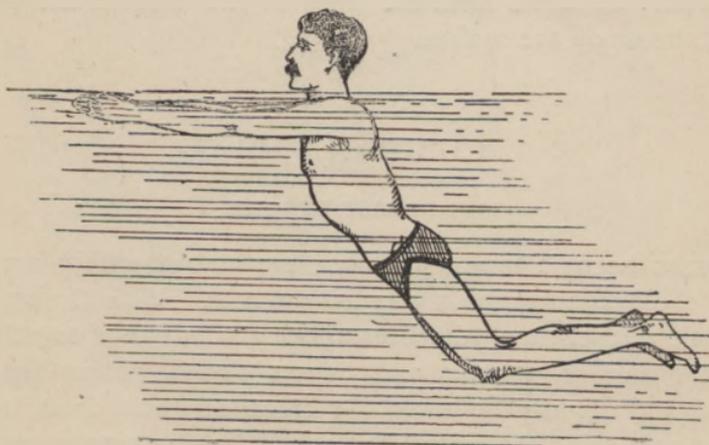


Fig. 28.

come together shoot out the hands (Fig. 30). When they reach their fullest stretch forwards (Fig. 31), turn the thumbs downwards again and complete the arm stroke by sweeping them backwards, keeping the legs rigid, and feet together as before, until the hands are approaching the chest. Then the legs are quickly bent and brought into position. Drop your legs,



Fig. 29
(from above).

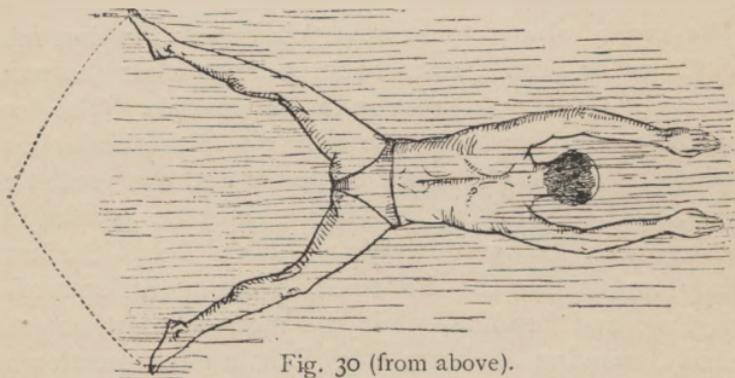


Fig. 30 (from above).

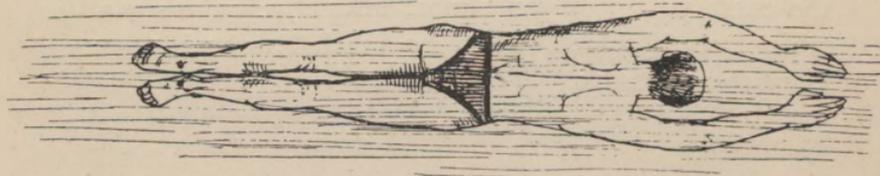


Fig. 31 (from above).

turn back and repeat. With a little practice you will find yourself able to take half a dozen arm and leg strokes in succession, and may call yourself a swimmer. Let *Festina lente*, however, be your motto, and keep well within your depth until you have acquired the confidence that practice will impart.

The knowledge that you cannot touch bottom gives a new and pleasant sensation of power, not unmixed with a spice of trepidation as the bather's feet fail to find soundings; but let these excursions over the safety boundary be as short at first as the cautious advances and retreats of a mouse from its hole, so that a stroke or two may bring you back into safety. Timidity is to be deprecated, but over-confidence has caused many a lamentable accident.

Be careful always to bear in mind the following rules: (1) Keep the head thrown back so as to clear the mouth and chin. (2) Try to swim as low as possible. The lower and the nearer level the plane in which the body lies in the water, the less the waste of power and the greater the speed, so that all rising and falling must be avoided, and nothing seen below the chin. Always keep the trunk steady and the spine hollowed, avoiding all squirming, wriggling, and bending, while the motions must be made steadily, avoiding all hurry. (3) Exhale your breath when the hands are extended in front supporting the head, and inhale as they are brought back—an action which expands the chest and gives you almost instinctively the signal for taking breath, which should be inhaled through the nose as much as possible.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SIDE STROKE.

BUT the breast stroke, useful as it is, has its disadvantages in a long swim, by reason of the tension thrown on the muscles of the neck in keeping the head thrown so far back from its normal position, while the chest and shoulders, square to the front, offer considerable resistance to the water. History has not handed down the name of the founder of the side stroke, but he deserves canonization equally with the man who ate the first oyster. Nature evidently intended man to swim on his side, as in this position the body moves more easily in the water, to which it offers less resistance, while the action of the arms is not so fatiguing, and the head is supported by the water at its proper angle to the trunk.

There is no arbitrary rule as to which side you shall swim on, left or right being a pure matter of choice ; but while I think the left preferable, as it gives greater play to the right arm, the right is the usual side "put on" by the majority. The great thing is to be able to swim equally well on either, as this gives you the advantage in bath racing of seeing your opponents all the way, and enables you to keep your face to the breakers in a rough sea on whichever tack you lay your course. There are several modifications of this grand stroke which we will take in detail, beginning with one particularly adapted for long distance swimming. To simplify matters we will in the following directions suppose that you are swimming on the left side. This stroke is divided into three parts : first, the leg kick ; second, the upper or right arm stroke, which we will term the propeller ;

and third, the under or left arm draw, which may be designated the sustainer. Unlike the frog action adopted in



Fig. 32 (from above).

the breast stroke, the leg kick is made in a different manner, as, while divided as far as possible in its performance, the legs take this position (Fig. 32), as seen from above, the upper one following more closely the motion it made in the breast stroke, by reason of the position of the body; but the under leg's action materially differs in this respect. Instead of the backs of the thighs and calves being in opposition, the under leg lies in the water in the same position as the upper.

Consequently the fore part of the thigh and shin act against the water after crossing backwards under the upper, with a bent knee, and when the leg is straightened to its fullest extent as the kick is made, the shin cuts the water forward again, to meet the back action of the upper leg.

The second part of the stroke is made with the upper hand, the propeller, which is shot forward past and on a level with the face, in as straight a line as possible, the palm being turned inwards and the fingers pointing to the

front, which gives a little extra reach (Fig. 33). On attaining its "stretch" the palm is quickly turned downward, slightly

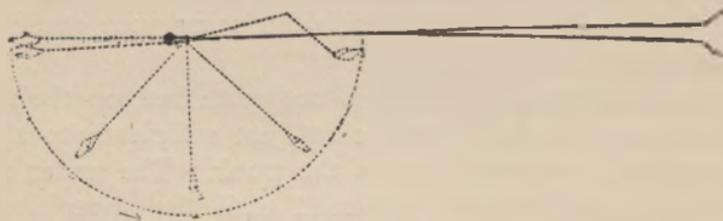


Fig. 33.

hollowed, fingers and thumb compressed, and, without being bent, the arm is swept in a right line downwards and backwards at its full extent, until the hand almost touches the inside of the thigh (Fig. 33). Its force is now for all practical purposes expended, and the elbow must be bent, but not so far as to show out of the water; and, continuing the movement, "feather"—*i.e.* turn the palm of the hand towards the body, and *steal* it by the elbow's action close to the body, until the tips of the fingers are on a level with the right breast. From this point a fresh stroke is taken.

Thirdly, the sustainer, or arm which is undermost, performs a somewhat different action in keeping the impetus sustained while the propeller and legs, their work done, are coming into position. It is struck out from the shoulder, the hand turned to the left until fully extended, when, like the right, the palm is turned downwards. The stroke is started with a straight elbow, but after the arm which is brought downwards has made a semi-circle, the elbow begins to bend outwards, and the hand, turning gradually sideways as it is drawn towards the left side, almost touches the bottom ribs. As the hand reaches the left breast it is again pointed to the front, the palm inwards for a fresh stroke.

The "feathering" of the hands is of importance, as you will be enabled to *steal* them forward into position without catching the water, and thereby reducing your speed by dragging.

The position of the body is not quite flush on the side, but a little inclined on the chest, just sufficiently to allow the propeller to work clear of the trunk. The under side of the face should be immersed until the upper nostril is just clear of the water, the breath being of course taken as the sustainer comes back, and expelled when the arms are shot forward.

Now to combine these three movements. Make a chest stroke in the usual manner, and as the arms are brought back turn on your side, which will bring you into position. Draw up the legs; the upper one crossing over the under, something like the positions of two of the legs seen on a Manx coin. Both knees should be well bent, the upper one as in the breast stroke, while the under leg is pressed back, the foot pointing in the same direction as the upper, and as near the surface as possible. Take a wide sweep with the legs, the upper one striking about an inch under water, and as you give the kick shoot both hands out past the head to their fullest extent. The inside of the tips of the fingers of the upper hand will almost touch the left wrist, from which they should be distant about two inches.

The under arm, from your position, will reach furthest to the front. Count one after the legs have come together, to give yourself the full benefit of the impetus; and now, as the feet are extended at their full stretch, toes pointing backwards, the stroke with the upper arm or propeller should be given with requisite force, leaving the sustainer still extended (Fig. 34). Directly the right hand completes its stroke at the thigh, and is stealing forward, the left

takes up its work, and as it approaches the ribs (Fig. 35) the legs are quickly drawn up for a fresh stroke; and if



Fig. 34 (from above).

the movements have been timed correctly the two hands will come into position again simultaneously, ready to be shot forward again. To attain a clockwork-like regularity

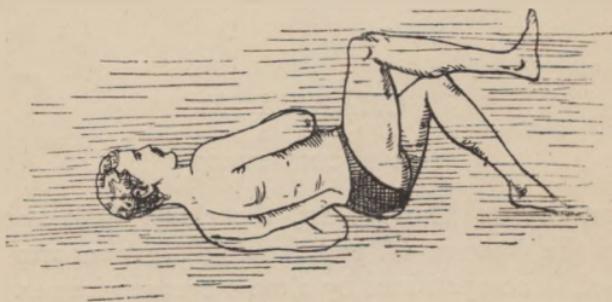


Fig. 35 (from above).

in combining the three component movements, the beginner should count one, two, three to himself, as first the legs, then the upper, and, thirdly, the undermost arm follow into play; and while giving each movement time he must not allow the force of it to be expended before supplementing with a fresh one—timing each so that arms and legs are all in readiness simultaneously for the shoot.

Try to swim as level as possible near the surface of the water, out of which no part of the *body* but the tip of the

uppermost shoulder should be visible. If you splash with your feet they are too high, if with your hands the legs are too low.

When you have mastered this stroke you will seem to move forward continuously, and not in a succession of jerks.

The appended diagrams show the position of the body as seen from above, at each point of this stroke, which it will readily be seen ensures as little resistance to the water as possible. After the kick the body rests an instant, plank-like, then, before the momentum has ceased, the right arm takes up its work, and then the left maintains the impetus, taking its place under the left breast at the moment the right hand and the legs come into position for another stroke.

CHAPTER X.

THE RACING STROKE.

I THINK that to Harry Gurr, the clever little shoeblack, belongs the honour of popularizing the over-arm stroke, now used in competitions by almost every swimmer.

In acquiring it you must remember that pace is the great desideratum, and, consequently, rapidity of action is requisite. To gain this you must combine two movements in one, by striking with the propeller on whichever side you swim at the *same* time as the feet, the sustainer acting in the same manner as before. As the legs are brought up for the kick the propeller is lifted clear of the water, the arm being slightly bent in a graceful curve, and thrown forward in an arc to its fullest extent, the hand being held in the scoop-like position it maintains in the water (Fig. 36). Now *kick*, and bring the propeller simultaneously downwards and back-

wards, with a bold and vigorous sweep, until it reaches the

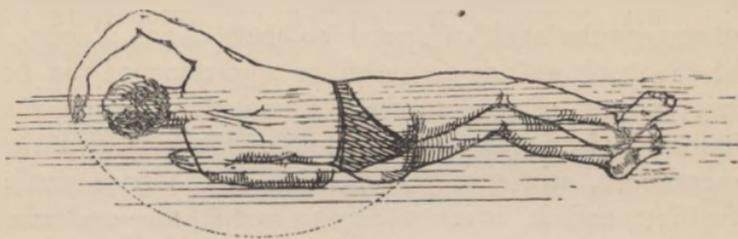


Fig. 36.

thigh when the elbow is bent (Fig. 37), drawing the hand upwards to be thrown forward again. As this *stroke* is being

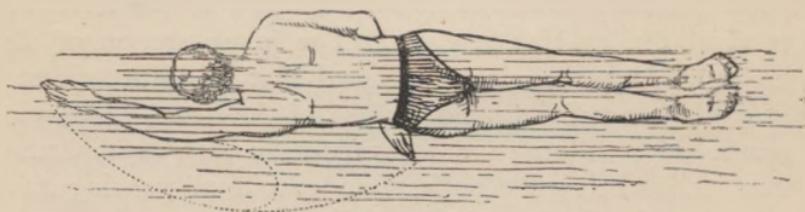


Fig. 37.

made, shoot out the sustainer quickly forwards, and while this arm is pulled in towards the body the legs and propeller are quickly brought into action for the next stroke. The learner will have to count one, two, only, in effecting this movement, as when the propeller and legs are striking, the sustainer is shot out, and *vice versa*.

This stroke may be swum with the hands under water. Stretch out the left or under arm, and then, as its stroke is made, draw up the legs, at the same time extending the upper arm to its fullest extent. This arm and the legs strike together. As you kick, bring it rapidly down towards the thigh, at the same time shooting out the under arm again. As the upper one shoots out the under one is being

drawn back, and *vice versa*. You count one, two. Remember to keep the hands as scoop-like as possible when striking, and acquire the habit of stretching them out in a right line with the trunk, as any deviation or squirming of the body takes you out of your course. By opening the eye which is under water, a view of the bottom of the bath, as it slides beneath you, will give you an idea of the pace you are travelling, and it is interesting to watch the underneath arm working through the water with the regularity of a piston.

As rising and falling in the water are sure signs of a waste of power, with, of course, a corresponding loss of pace, particular attention should be paid to the direction in which the leg kick is given. The lower portion of the body should be so nicely balanced that the legs separate in a plane parallel to the surface of the water, which will ensure their delivery and recovery at an even depth, some four inches below the surface, and avoid all rocking and splashing, the Scylla and Charybdis of this stroke.

CHAPTER XI.

SWIMMING ON THE BACK.

THIS is useful in varying the position and resting the limbs, besides giving opportunity for a "breather" in a long swim. Place both hands on your hips, thumbs to the rear, and extend yourself on your back, which, with the back of the head, will be immersed, the face and chest being exposed. Now, drawing up the knees, toes turned outwards, work the legs as in the breast stroke (Fig. 38), keeping the knees under water. This stroke can be made a fast one for a short distance as follows, but it has the disadvantage of not

allowing you to see whether you are going straight or not, and the water *will* get into your nostrils.

Proceed as before, but as you make the kick throw the

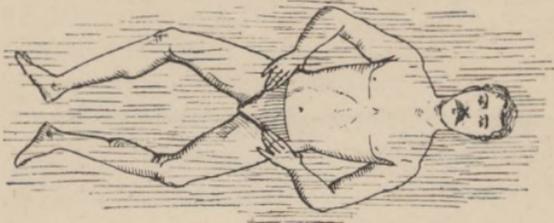


Fig. 38 (from above).

arms boldly and gracefully over your head, and as the feet stretched out come together sweep the hands like sculls through the water until they touch your thighs, the action of legs and arms being alternate. For a short distance this stroke is very efficacious.

Swimming on the back is a very easy and useful accomplishment, as, combined with floating, it enables you to rest the arms and legs in a long swim, while relieving the muscles of the throat and neck, which are apt to become rigid after a spell of breast work.

Swimming feet first on the back with the hands only. This is a comfortably lazy style of progression, and handy if, dropping down with the stream, you want to have a look ahead. Turn on the back, stretch your legs out, heels touching, toes turned up, and while *slightly* bending at the hips use your arms as in the chest stroke, striking a little downwards at the same time, to keep the feet well up.

The reverse movement in the direction of the head entails harder work. Lie back as before, straighten the arms, which are kept near the *outside* of the thighs, and by a succession of twists of the forearm and wrists describe

small circles with the hands from back to front. As the hands return they should be feathered, *i.e.* the backs turned upwards, and then turned down again to execute the scoop-like movement to the front which completes the *lower* and *forward* half of the circle (Fig. 39).

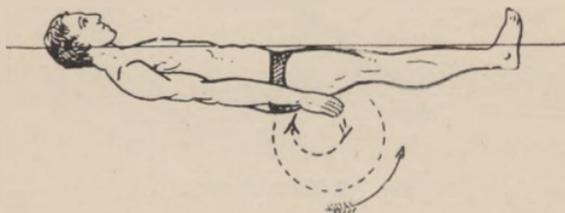


Fig. 39.

Swimming feet first may also be effectively performed as follows:—Cease paddling; now turn your hands palms uppermost, and bring them through the water until they meet over your head (Fig. 40). The effect of this stroke

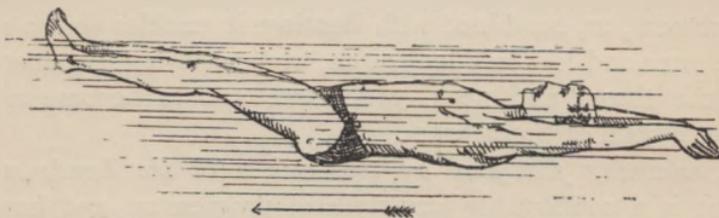


Fig. 40.

will be to sink your head and upper part of the body, leaving your feet, up to the ankles, sticking out of the water. Keep the arms nearly extended, turn the palms of the hands outwards, thumbs to the front, and the same scoop-like action of forearm and wrist will drive you feet first with comical effect. Breathe out slightly through the nose to keep the water from filling your nostrils.

Swimming backwards on the chest. This is a very pretty feat, and one in which, with a little practice, you can puzzle an ordinary breast-swimmer, who sees your face turned towards him and yet can't overhaul you. Turn on the breast, raising the legs (which you must keep lifting alternately from the knee gently up and down, so as to "flip" the surface of the water with the insteps), to keep them from sinking. To make a start, grasp an armful of water, and as the arms reach their fullest extent in front of you, bring into play the wrist circle, driving the water from you with the palms turned back from left to right. Keep the arms and body stiff, and you will soon find yourself under weigh.

These same little wrist circles are very useful; not only do they wonderfully strengthen the arm, but in treading water, resting on the back, or "balancing," their slightest action serves to keep the body afloat.

CHAPTER XII.

HAND OVER-HAND SWIMMING.

IN this stroke the right and left sides work alternately. Take your position as if for the breast stroke, and when the hands have completed their first movement, swing the right, as if in the racing side stroke, clear out of the water, with a *circular* sweep. Directly the hand at its fullest extent is immersed, turn it in as scoop-like a position as possible and pull it through the water towards you, at the same time turning slightly on the right side and giving a vicious kick with the right leg. After the hand in its backward sweep has reached the right thigh, bring it to the waist and steal it forward in anticipation of the next thrust, while swinging the left simultaneously forward for its corresponding stroke.

You will find a slight rocking motion set up which facilitates the corresponding action of the left arm and leg.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRICKS.

Swimming like a dog. This, although not a fast stroke, is useful as a rest and in going through weeds, each hand and foot being used alternately. The palms of the hands are turned down, the wrist being bent to its fullest extent when the arm is drawn in towards the breast, and straightened as thrust forward for a fresh stroke. The action of the legs is like walking with a very bent knee, the right hand and right leg working together, and *vice versa*.



Fig. 41.

Treading water. Another capital dodge for taking a rest. While the hands are making the useful small circles, the legs, well bent at the knees, alternately make the customary kick, the swimmer squatting, as it were, in the water; or the hands may be rested on the hips, or the arms folded (Fig. 41), while the legs strike downwards together, very little expenditure of power being necessary to keep afloat.

Balancing. Fold your arms, throw your head well back, so that its weight rests on the water, and straighten your legs, toes pointing downwards. You will find yourself perpendicularly suspended, with your mouth just above water,

rising and falling slightly with each breath. Now if you bring the head to its usual position, you will find that directly its weight falls on the column of the neck the face will be submerged. By stretching the arms behind the head and throwing it back again your feet will gradually rise until, in salt water, at least, you can see your toes sticking up. On a summer day it is very luxurious to bask thus in the sun, particularly if just enough swell is on to rock you.

If a friend is bathing with you, he can swim with one arm and push you along, head first, by the other.

The double plank. Floating himself, and placing the soles of his feet against yours, your friend can impel you forwards by the circular motion of his hands. Should you wish to go faster, embrace his neck with your feet, and you can both travel, feet or head first, by the aid of the hand circles alone at a fairly respectable pace (Fig. 42).



Fig. 42.

To see who is doing most work, float sole to sole again, and let each, propelling forwards, endeavour to drive his opponent back (Fig. 43). This is splendid exercise for the muscles of the forearm.

Leap-frog. While your partner treads water, place your hands on his shoulders and push him down until your feet

can take the place of your hands. Then with a vigorous shove send him towards the bottom, at the same time plung-

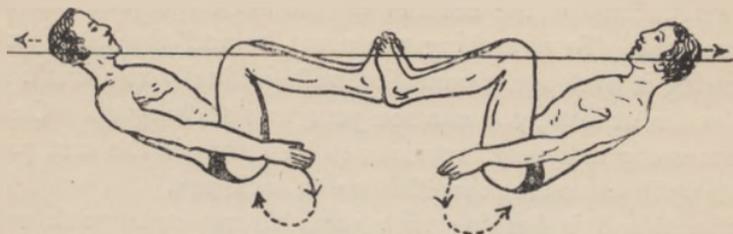


Fig. 43.

ing yourself as far out of the water as you can. When your turn comes to be sent under, pinch your nostrils. Any number of swimmers can play this game.

The forward somersault. When treading water, press the hands as far backwards as they will go, draw up the knees, and, bending forward, turn head downwards, making the hand circles to the outside from left to right. The feet

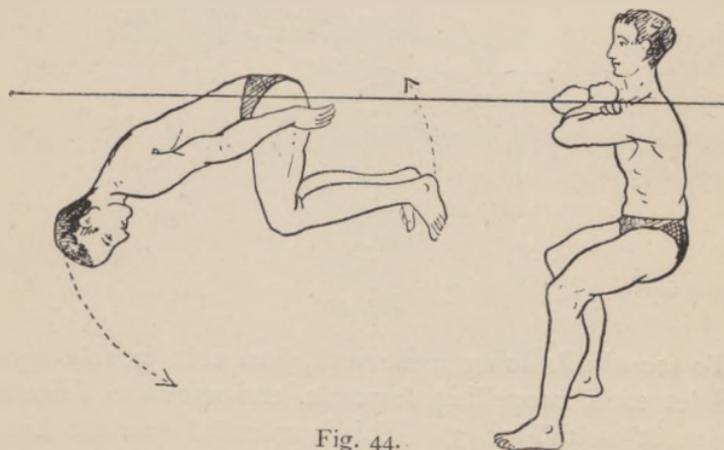


Fig. 44.

will rapidly rise, and as they swing over the head will shoot out of the water again (Fig. 44).

The backward somersault. This is more easy of accomplishment than the other. Floating on the back, stretch both arms out at a right angle, making the circles the reverse way while bending the knees. You will roll backwards as on a pivot, the feet on reaching the turning-point giving you a quick send over, which brings you back to the first position.

When treading water, you can, by sudden, vigorous, and quick alternate kicks, combined with a rapid circular downward motion of the hands, raise yourself clean out of the water as high as your waist, and sustain yourself in that position for a second or two, just long enough to catch at any object which was out of your reach when swimming. Time yourself to make the fling on the crest of a wave, and you will be surprised to find how high you can go.

The washing-tub. Cross your legs like a tailor, and "bunch" yourself up as compactly as possible; a slight wrist action will keep you up. Now if with the right arm you grasp the water, pulling it towards you, while with the left you make the breast stroke (Fig. 45), you will find yourself spinning round like a teetotum.

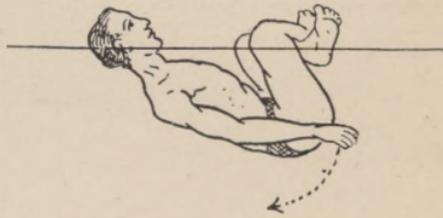


Fig. 45.

Swimming under water. The ordinary breast stroke is the best, the hands striking obliquely as the swimmer wishes to ascend or descend, the head, of course, being kept in its natural position. Should the water be too muddy for you to see your way, stretch your hands out in front, palms downwards, swimming with your legs alone, or you may be brought sharply up by butting some obstacle with your head, which will feel sore for several days afterwards.

The cutter. While floating on the back, bring the hands to the outside of the thigh, making the wrist circle from inside to out; raise either leg out of the water by first bending the knee, and gradually elevate it until it is hoisted

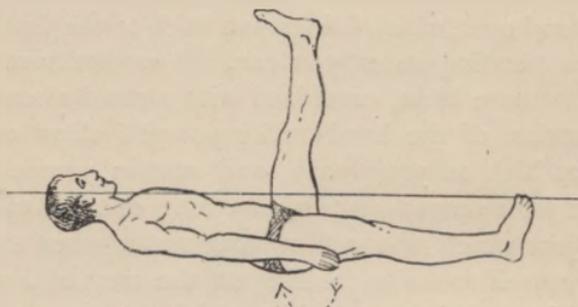


Fig. 46.

like a mast at a right angle to the body. The other leg must be kept rigid (Fig. 46).

The schooner. When you have become proficient at stepping one mast, you may improve on it by carrying more "sail" in the shape of two, by raising both legs simultaneously. This is a difficult feat, the two "spars" having a tendency to sink your stern, and the hand-circles must be pressed downwards

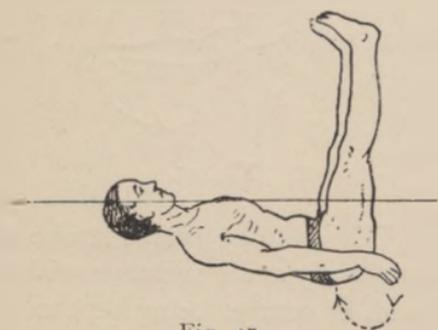


Fig. 47.

more forcibly. By reversing the circles, and bending over the legs, you can turn over backwards (Fig. 47).

CHAPTER XIV.

PLUNGING AND DIVING.

To walk into the water and "duck" is rather an ignominious proceeding, only to be excused in the novice or the lady bather we see at our watering-places bobbing up and down at the end of a rope fastened to the bathing-machine. The swimmer should not rest content until he is able to plunge in like a workman; but first, a word of caution! Never attempt to dive unless you *know* that the water is deep enough for the purpose.

Many serious accidents have occurred from this mistake, notably when bathing at sea. An incautious plunge from the ship's side into the sail bath extemporized overboard to ward off any danger from sharks has resulted fatally to the rash swimmer, and at all times danger attends rash plunging.

It is, nevertheless, astonishing into what shallow water an expert can fearlessly dive from a height, his arms and head emerging almost before the feet have disappeared beneath the surface. A stalwart friend of the writer's, weighing some seventeen stone, especially delighted in diving off the gallery at Brill's Baths, Brighton, whenever he had the opportunity; and at the same watering-place I have seen Professor Worthington dive from a flag-staff into six feet of water at the head of the Old Pier and take no harm; but the bather needs be very quick of hand and eye, and many accidents attest the fact of the game not being worth the candle.

The modes of entering shallow and deep water differ materially. In shallow plunging your object is to keep as near the surface and gain as much "way" from the jump

as possible, a good send off being of great importance.



Fig. 48.

To gain confidence, the learner should make his first essay from as near the surface of the water as possible, gradually increasing the height of his plunging station.

We will suppose the beginner to be standing on the edge a few inches above the water's level (Fig. 48), to commence with. The feet should be placed together on the verge of the bank or board, so that the toes may take a grip which will give the body a purchase; tuck in your stomach and lean a little forward, with the arms hanging straight down a little in advance of the hips.

Now slightly bend both knees, at the same time slightly swinging the arms to the rear to get an impetus. Launch the body, head first, forwards and downwards at an oblique angle by quickly stiffening the knees,

simultaneously shooting forward the hands to their fullest extent over the head, palms downwards. As the body leaves its pedestal and is almost in a horizontal line with the water the toes give the final impetus (Fig. 49), their spring will tend to throw the legs (which should be kept rigid, avoiding all bending of the knee) upwards, the toes pointing to the rear. As soon as you have gained a little confidence you should gradually increase the height of your plunge, and when you are able to accomplish it cleanly, you will enter the water thus (Fig. 50). Remember that the more boldly you hurl yourself into the water the better chance you have of

success. I have seen bathers extend the arms over their heads and fall forwards, a *modus operandi* which generally

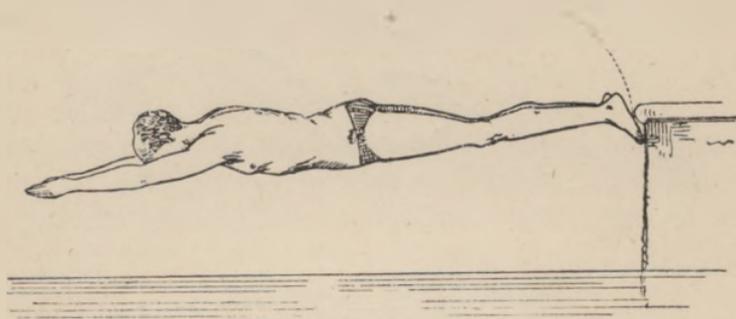


Fig. 49.

entails a smart tingling of the chest and stomach, as the body is almost certain to drop flat on the surface.

A very neat plunge, which requires practice and a little

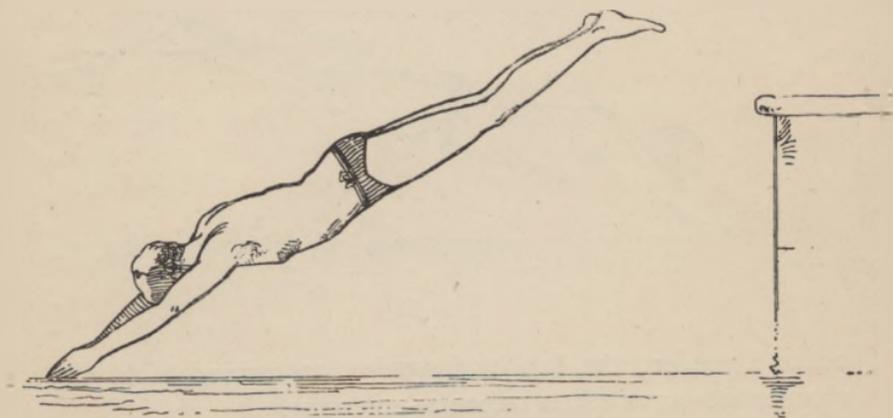


Fig. 50.

pluck, is made by standing erect on the brink edge or board and instead of springing from the board allowing the body, kept rigid, to fall forwards, until it attains the proper

angle (Fig. 51). Here the arms are shot out and the knees and toes give the finishing shoot, which, rightly timed,

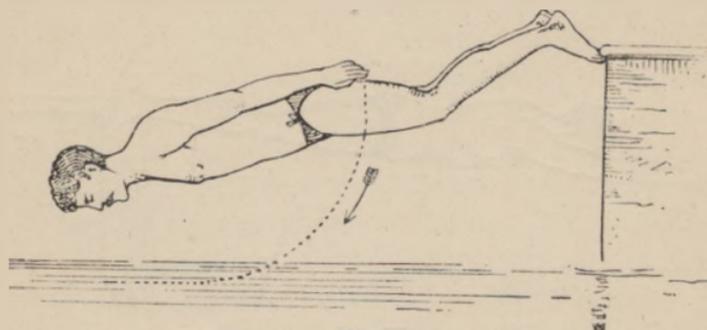


Fig. 51.

arrests the body in its downward progress (Fig. 52), and launches it plank-like at a proper angle into the water. When under the surface, you will find the extended hands

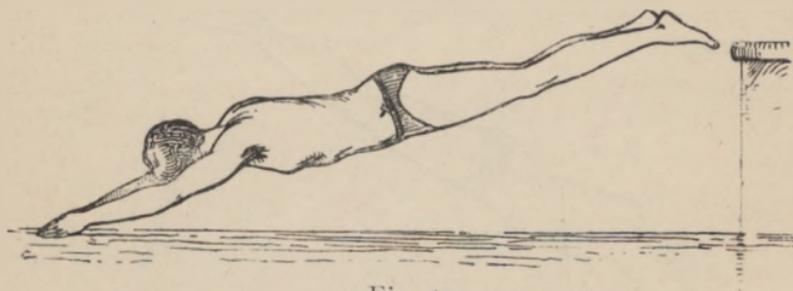


Fig. 52.

act as a rudder; the further the palms are turned back, the sharper the curve taken before re-emerging.

Shut your eyes on plunging; you may open them under the water; and remember to keep your back hollowed, and the neck and body stiff.

The *deep* plunge, which requires the body to descend at a sharper angle, must be made thus: bend your knees

and back until your face almost touches your toes, stretching both arms over your head with the thumbs locked together and fingers pointed. You *unroll*, as it were, without a jump forwards, the legs straightening with a jerk as the head and shoulders approach the water. Keep your hands straight until you want to come up again, when the palms must be turned back towards the surface, and a kick or two will accelerate your upward progress. The higher the pedestal from which you plunge, the further out you must jump so as to retain the same angle of entry.

In plunging to a depth, it is better to use arms and legs in swimming upwards if the bottom has not been reached, as without an accelerating shoot from the bottom, the body will not of itself return so swiftly to the surface as anticipated.

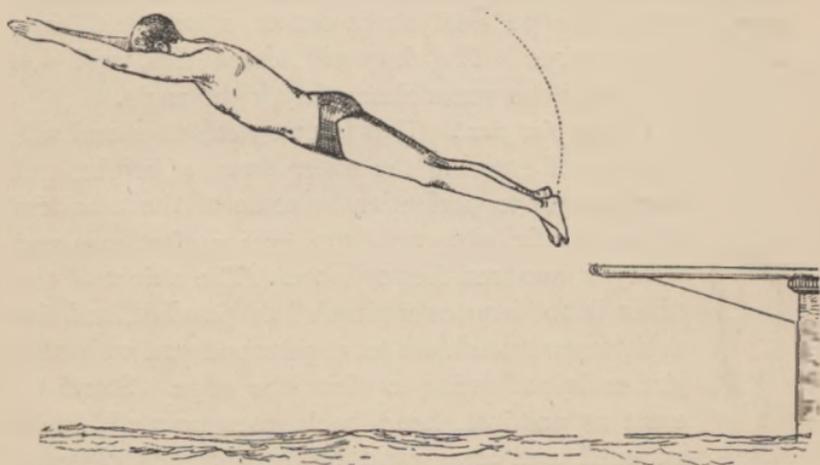


Fig. 53.

The running plunge. Retire some twenty yards, and then, putting on all steam, come best pace to the bank, and on reaching the edge launch yourself into the air thus (Fig. 53),

throwing the arms well forward. As your legs leave the bank, the force of the jump will tend to throw them up and deflect the fore part of the body, but keep them as straight as possible and don't let them bend at the knee. In this way you can clear a pretty high rail with a little practice.

In diving from a height, you will at first experience an unpleasant sensation of leaving your stomach behind, but this soon passes away. The great feature is to hit the happy knack of not putting on too much pace on leaving the starting-point, while, at the same time, avoiding the other extreme of simply lobbing in. In the one instance you are apt to overbalance and come on your back, while in the other you fall all of a heap. Stiffen your neck, chin on chest, stretch your hands over the head, and as the body



leaves the pedestal shoot out at an angle of forty-five degrees. The drop will lessen this, and you will enter the water almost at a right angle.

Diving feet first. This is a very effective and safe method of entering the water from a height, and one brought to perfection by some of the islanders of the Pacific, who can drop, with perfect ease and safety, a hundred feet or more. The object of the diver is to drop as "plumb" as possible, and for this purpose you must leave your pedestal with only just sufficient spring to clear the edge. Stand as erect as possible, head back, toes pointed, knees stiffened, and arms rigid by the sides, as close to the trunk as possible, and launch yourself with a slight action of the toes, and hold your breath (Fig. 54).

Fig. 54.

If these directions are properly carried out, you will cleave the water as true as a plummet. On no account

give way to the sensation which, when you find yourself cutting the air, would prompt you to open the legs and spread out the arms, and by all means ascertain that the water is deep enough, or you may, as the writer did, break a great toe on the bottom. When you find yourself at a sufficient depth, spread out the arms and legs (Fig. 55); this action will at once stop your downward way, and a few kicks will speed you to the surface. If you have mastered this plunge, you can modify it by stretching the arms perpendicularly over the head, which will accelerate and emphasize your downward drop.



Fig. 55.

Plunging feet first. Stand as if for an ordinary plunge (Fig. 48), and then, well bending the knees, jump as far outwards as you can, at the same time throwing the body back with the arms extended over the head, palms upwards, while straightening the legs (Fig. 56). Don't be discouraged by coming flat on your back a few times, but persevere until you can make a perfect plunge and feel yourself swing through the water feet first (Fig. 57). This, though a difficult feat, is worth any amount of practice to attain, as very few amateurs can accomplish it to perfection. I think I may say, without flattery, that

Mr. Horace Davenport is *facile princeps* at this eccentric plunge.

The Belgian jump. This is a sensational and but little

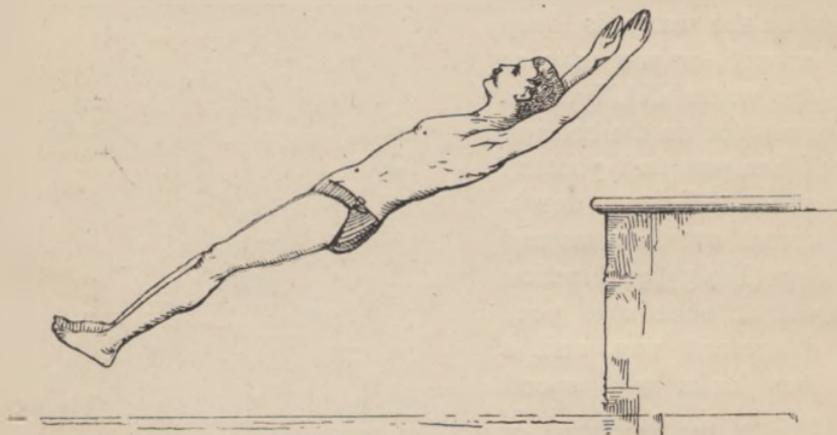


Fig. 56.

practised way of entering the water. Don't try it, however, if any friends are standing by, as you will probably drench



Fig. 57.

them through. Standing on the diving-board, swing your arms and jump boldly out, immediately crossing the legs as closely as possible and embracing them with the arms

like a tailor (Fig. 58). You will come down with a regular "bang" on the water, which will splash to a great height. Mind and tuck your *drawers* up tightly before taking the leap, and jump squarely so as not to land on the *back*, but in a sitting posture. The water will not sting you. I have tried it from the top gallery of the old Charing Cross floating bath, now, alas! a thing of the past.

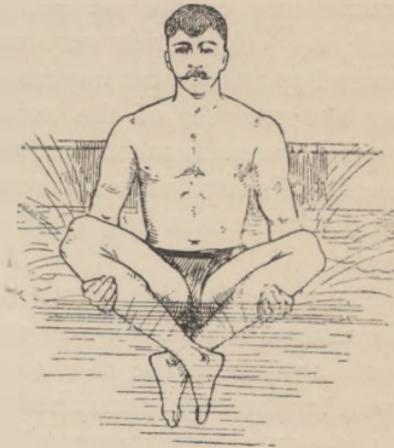


Fig. 58.

CHAPTER XV.

BATH SWIMMING.

DWELLERS in big cities, far from the seaboard, who possibly only get one chance in the course of the year of trying conclusions with Father Ocean, have to fall back on the public swimming baths or park ponds, which are not always pleasant for bathing. Thanks to a cheery spirit which inculcates the doctrine of making the best of circumstances, bath swimming has become invested with a charm which grows on the bather, who finds himself, night after night, cleaving the pellucid wave supplied for the occasion by one of the big London water companies.

Bath swimming naturally gave rise to bath racing, and in this branch of sport art has again stepped in to assist nature. In so necessarily limited a space the swimmer

finds himself constrained to interrupt his stroke as he reaches each end of the bath, to turn before starting on a fresh lap. Now, this very necessity of turning has been worked up into a most important factor, as, instead of checking the progress of the swimmer, it gives him, properly applied, so much assistance, that one hundred yards in five lengths of a bath, with four turns thrown in, can be swum in quicker time than one hundred yards dead level in open water.

To make the turn neatly requires a little practice, but the time expended will well repay the trouble. Start a few yards away from the side or end, and then, on your side, swim for the edge, remembering that the faster you come at it the more vigorously you will be able to kick off again. On no account let a spent stroke carry you to the edge, but dash at it in full swing. Mind this, and if only a few inches off give an extra kick. Coming with an impetus against the end of the bath, seize the edge with the propeller, or the uppermost arm, while planting the sustainer or lower hand against the side on a level with the hip (Fig. 59). Now pull yourself up as quickly as possible against the wall of the bath, twist the body to the left (if swimming on the left side), or the right if on the right side, your head looking over the leading shoulder. Double up, bend both knees, and bring both feet with the impetus with which you arrive, against the side of the bath, and, twisting round to the outside, duck your head and push with all your force as you stiffen the legs, at the same time letting go with both hands, which must be shot out in front as you give the shove, as in the plunge. Remember that the faster you come at the side the quicker you slew round like a weasel, and the more firmly the feet will be planted against the side of the bath for a vigorous shove.

The best way to learn to turn is to watch a proficient once or twice, and then try to do likewise ; if a rope is reeved round the bath, it is much better to seize this instead

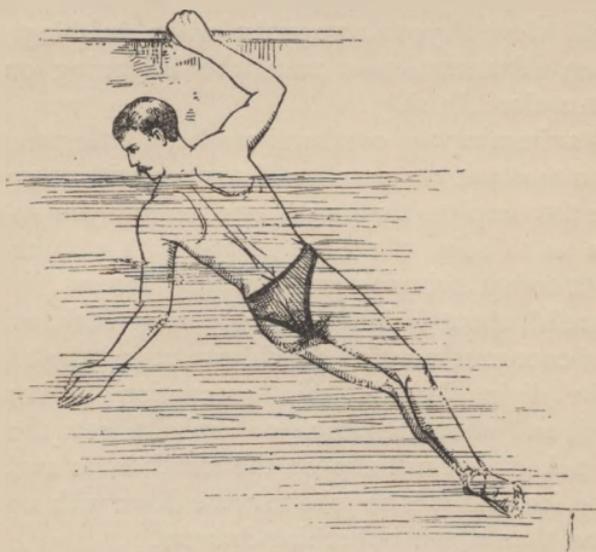


Fig. 59.

of the edge, as the "brim," being generally more distance out of water, lifts you unnecessarily high. You will find it capital practice to plunge across the bath, and then, catching the rope, squirm round and shove off for the back plunge ; but unless you come at the turn with some *way on*, you will find that you've no send-off for the return journey.

Having mastered the turn, you will instinctively find yourself indulging in friendly spins against other bathers—capital practice, as it gives you confidence and teaches the knack of managing the breathing. By this time you will have discovered your fastest side, as cases in which a swimmer is equally good on both are extremely rare.

As bath distances are generally measured by so many even lengths, you will find it an advantage to start on the opposite side to that on which you swim, that is, with your face to the edge of the bath in the first lap, as this will give you a full view of your antagonist when finishing the last length, an advantage to a man who is putting on all he knows in a close finish.

When swimming the overhand stroke, a little practice will teach you to count the number of strokes, with the push off, requisite to complete the length, and enable you so to time the turn as to seize the edge of the bath with the upper hand as it comes swinging mechanically forward.

Be careful about larking in a swimming bath, as though a strip of cocoanut matting should run round the edges and cover the diving boards, this precaution is sometimes neglected, and when the stone or asphalte gets thoroughly wet the naked foot will slip on the treacherous surface like a skate on ice, and it is no joke to come down with no further protection than a pair of bathing-drawers.

The porpoise stroke. To do this properly you don't want the water more than five feet deep, as, if it has a greater depth, you have to bring the hands into play. Sit on the edge of the shallow end of the bath, and, taking a few rapid inhalations to clear the lungs, draw a full breath. Place the soles of the feet against the side of the bath and, doubling up, dive in. As the palms of the hands touch the bottom, bring the feet up to them outside each hand, and from a bent knee jump forward and upwards at an angle of forty-five degrees, at the same time letting the arms drop stiffly down each thigh and humping the back. This will send you a foot out of the water, first the head and then the whole body following the curve. As you swiftly approach the bottom, again stretch out the arms, and repeat the

galloping process until you reach the end or have to stop for want of breath.

You will travel at a great pace in a succession of jumps, which to the looker-on will give a ludicrous idea of a string of porpoises. Mind, as the head emerges, to shut your eyes, or you may strike them against the surface and see sparks.

The somersault off the board is comparatively easy, the backward one being most quickly acquired. Stand on the plunge-board with your back to the water, arms by the sides, and then, jumping once or twice on the toes to get an impetus, jump upwards, outwards, and backwards, at the same time keeping the legs close together and throwing them over the head. A little practice will enable you to time the turn, which should not be given with a jerk. The great thing is to obtain plenty of spring, and you will be able to make the somersault off a dead surface.

The forward somersault is most effective with a run, though it can be done standing with a violent jerk forwards.

Retire several paces so as to get a good impetus, mind you run on cocoa-matting, and, accelerating your pace, jump with both feet together on to the spring-board, letting the return spring launch you forward at an angle of forty-five degrees. As you leave the board, the hands, which, with fists clenched, have been kept with the elbows bent, should be straightened down with a jerk, the head at the same moment being tucked in, and, the body doubling up, will turn in the air; and, should the somersault be a clean one, you will land feet first in the bath.

Run as before, and make the plunge at the deep end. Directly you enter the water, curve your hands and arms downwards and inwards, at the same time tucking in your

head. This will cause you to roll under so quickly that you will come shooting back to the surface almost before your feet have disappeared.

Don't try to stop yourself by bringing the feet forward and arresting your way with the hands, as you will strain the abdominal muscles with the sudden jerk against the pressure of the water.

Timber topping. Should a *stout* rail run alongside the bath, you can pop over it very easily, finishing with a neat dive. Place both hands on the rail opposite the shoulders; then, bending down, spring once or twice on your toes, and, giving the final spring, draw your body head-first through the arms, keeping the legs together. As your

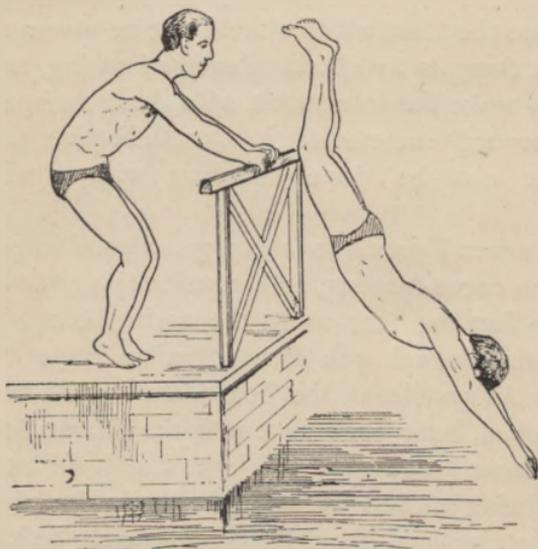


Fig. 60.

knees clear the rail, let go, and shooting both hands forward, you will dive neatly into the bath (Fig. 60).

There are some very effective somersaults and dives to

be taken from a trapeze ; but, as people will get in the way at the wrong moment, the use of the trapeze has unfortunately been tabooed at most baths.

CHAPTER XV

CAUTIONS.

I MUST confess to a sense of distrust of fresh water since I cut my foot with a broken glass bottle at Henley ; but then, on the other hand, a friend gashed his forehead with a similar abomination when plunging at Margate. Once while camping out up the Thames one of our party was spiked right through the instep by a neglected porcupine quill float, which transfixed his naked foot as he ran for a header ; so that the bather in strange waters has always need of caution. We read some time ago of a careless bather being terribly lacerated by a broken tin pot ; and in the most seductive reaches "snags" and sawyers lurk unseen, while loose stakes project from the banks.

Beware of weeds ; and should you incontinently find yourself going through a bed, cease kicking, and, keeping the knees straight, gently flip the surface with one instep after the other, to keep the legs on the surface, at the same time adopting the "dog stroke" for the hands. In this style, the current will take you through the cold slimy "tails" of lily and weed ; but on no account attempt to continue swimming, as the action of drawing up the arms and legs is liable to enwrap the clinging weeds round them, and the more you struggle the tighter they entwine. Keep a sharp look-out for weeds therefore ; but, if in, the above *modus operandi* will pull you through. The author has

“crept” over furlongs of weed-beds in the river Lea at Hertford when a boy.

Beware of cold springs in unknown waters, as the sudden deadly chill frequently induces cramp, that bugbear of the bather. To an adept, a sudden seizure causes little perturbation, as he can shift with any position, and, while floating or treading water, rub and stretch the tormented limb. It is always best to turn on the back, and if an arm be attacked, raise it out of water, while rubbing with the other hand and closing and opening the fist. If the leg, and particularly the back of the thigh, be seized, turn up the toes as far as possible to stretch the leaders; apply friction, and try to kick out of the water until the stiffened muscles relax. Floating “à la washing tub” will bring your legs well within reach, and you can vary the treatment by swimming with arms or legs only.

CHAPTER XVII.

SEA-BATHING.

WHETHER sparkling placidly in the summer sun, with hardly a ripple lazily fringing the beach, or stirred into “soap-suds” by the wind, till the white horses come careering swiftly towards the shore, the sea is the swimmer’s paradise, and few days are, during the season, too rough to keep him from venturing forth. Before taking to the water, however, the bather should make himself acquainted with the set of the tide, which, at some spots on our coasts, runs at a pace against which the fastest swimmer would struggle in vain, so that he may find himself going out to sea, with the prospect of having to “wait for the turn of the tide” for

his return. It is also well to learn from the intelligent native the lay of rocks, shoals, and cross-currents, so as to be master of the situation before making a start.

The pleasantest tide to catch in sea-bathing is that which has been flowing, *i.e.* coming in, over the sands that have been exposed to the sun, as then the temperature up to a certain distance is comfortably warm. Should a cold wind have been blowing, the belt of water nearest the shore will, on the contrary, be much more chilly than the deep beyond. Always endeavour to bathe at high tide if possible, as at some places, such as Weymouth, Hayling Island, and Scarborough, the water shoals so gradually that the bather has to wade out a long distance from the shore. It is best to strike your course in a diagonal line across and against the tide, as the return journey with it is less trouble ; or else, getting out forty yards or so from the shore, swim along the coast, always starting against the tide or current.

When the sea is rough, it is easy to enter, as the bather will find the breakers regularly decrease and increase in volume from every seventh wave, and advantage can be taken of the lulls. Watching your opportunity to enter the water, dive through the first two or three curling waves, as the breakers are always worse in shore, and about one hundred yards out it is much plainer sailing. In a rough sea, swim with your face to the runners, which an ability to use either side will enable you to do ; by facing them, you can keep your head clear, manage the breath better, and stand less chance of getting a mouthful or two of sea-water. In coming out, you should depend on a friend for the signal when to make the final rush to land, so as to escape a buffeting from the ground-swell or under-tow.

One subtle source of danger on some coasts lies in the sunken reefs of rocks, full of deep pools, into which the

incautious bather, standing up to his knees at one moment, suddenly disappears "over head" the next. The beginner cannot be too careful in seeking previous information as to the bottom at all strange spots. I retain a sorrowful remembrance of the sad fate of a fine young fellow at Redcar, who, with two friends, succeeded to the machines we had just vacated. The sand suddenly shelved to a rock pool, and before his companions, neither of whom could swim, could grasp his outstretched hand, the current swept him into its depths only a few yards from shore, and with fatal result. We met him coming down full of fun; half an hour later a mournful procession brought his body back to the hotel. Had either of his friends possessed a knowledge of swimming, the catastrophe would have been averted.

Rocks in deep water are also sources of danger, a friend of mine getting wedged in a crevice while diving at Jersey, and having to be hauled out by the legs by two swimmers, who, fortunately, were enabled to restore him, more frightened than hurt.

Cross-currents form unexpected traps into which good swimmers fall, and an eye should be kept on some landmark on the beach, to note in which direction you are actually progressing. An expert, while enjoying a comfortable float off Weymouth, was so rapidly and unconsciously carried out to sea, that the return journey across wind and tide was accomplished with difficulty, and he was fairly exhausted when his feet at length touched the longed-for "bottom."

On some coasts there lurks an obnoxious, though rather handsome, little fish, known as the weaver. The thumbs and hands of the fisherfolk are frequently poisoned by this little Borgia of the sea, whose spines are insidious and perch-like. At first the sting is hardly felt, but, especially

if in the sole of the foot, a swelling frequently spreads and causes a pricking pain. I have found that the best treatment is to cut the outer skin and, opening the swelling with a lancet or penknife, thoroughly wash the blister in the sea or strong salt and water, taking care that no sand gets under the skin.

Should a boat be chartered on a fine day, swim with the tide, letting your pilot keep handy, and if you are not an adept at getting back again, see that he has some steps affixed to the stern. In getting into a boat always go to leeward, as the set of the tide will otherwise draw your legs under and impede your efforts. To enter a boat, swim briskly up, catch the gunwale with both hands, and, giving a vigorous kick downwards with the legs, raise yourself. As the arms straighten, slew round, and, half sitting on the edge, put your hand on the seat or bottom and slip backwards. You will save barking or knocking your knees this way. The stern is the best place to start from, but you must be careful of the irons on which the rudder is fixed.

When using a bathing machine, see that your doors are fastened, and be particular to attend to the signal of the boy on the horse, or you may find yourself flung violently through the opening doors as the beast begins to strain at his collar. It is a very useful wrinkle after going into the sea to rinse the head and face with *fresh* water.

In some places, after a ground-swell, the water in-shore will abound with jelly-fish, washed in from the open sea. A very unpleasant sensation follows contact with one of these medusæ, the skin smarting as if stung by nettles for hours afterwards. The juice of a lemon rubbed on the spot will quickly allay all the irritation.

APPENDIX.

DIRECTIONS ISSUED BY THE ROYAL HUMANE
SOCIETY FOR RESTORING THE APPARENTLY
DEAD.

SEND for medical assistance, blankets, and dry clothing, but proceed to treat the patient *instantly*.

The points to be aimed at are—first, and *immediately*, the restoration of breathing; and secondly, after breathing is restored, the promotion of warmth and circulation.

The efforts to restore life must be persevered in until the arrival of medical assistance, or until the pulse and breathing have ceased for an hour.

Rule 1. TO ADJUST THE PATIENT'S POSITION.—Place the patient on his back on a flat surface, inclined a little from the feet upwards; raise and support the head and shoulders on a small firm cushion or folded article of dress placed under the shoulder-blades. Remove all tight clothing from about the neck and chest.

Rule 2. TO MAINTAIN A FREE ENTRANCE OF AIR INTO THE WINDPIPE.—Cleanse the mouth and nostrils; open the mouth; draw forward the patient's tongue, and keep it forward: an elastic band over the tongue and under the chin will answer this purpose.

Rule 3. TO IMITATE THE MOVEMENTS OF BREATHING.—First, *Induce inspiration.* Place yourself at the head of the patient, grasp his arms (at the elbow joints), raise them upwards by the sides of his head, stretch them steadily but gently upwards, for two seconds. By this means fresh air is drawn into the lungs by raising the ribs.

Secondly, *Induce expiration.* Immediately turn down the patient's arms, and press the elbows firmly but gently downwards against the sides of the chest, for two seconds. By this means foul air is expelled from the lungs by depressing the ribs.

Thirdly, *Continue these movements.* Repeat these measures alternately, deliberately, and perseveringly, fifteen times in a minute, until a spontaneous effort to respire be perceived. By these means an exchange of air is produced in the lungs similar to that effected by natural respiration.

When a spontaneous effort to respire is perceived, cease to imitate the movements of breathing, and proceed to induce circulation and warmth (as below).

Rule 4. TO EXCITE RESPIRATION.—During the employment of the above method, excite the nostrils with snuff or smelling salts, or tickle the throat with a feather. Rub the chest and face briskly, and dash cold and hot water alternately on them. Friction of the limbs and body with dry flannel or cloths should be had recourse to. When there is proof of returning respiration, the individual may be placed in a warm bath, the movements of the arms above described being continued until respiration is fully restored. Raise the body in twenty seconds to a sitting position, dash cold water against the chest and face, and pass ammonia under the nose. Should a galvanic apparatus be at hand, apply the sponges to the region of the diaphragm and the heart.

TREATMENT AFTER NATURAL BREATHING HAS BEEN RESTORED.

TO INDUCE CIRCULATION AND WARMTH.—Wrap the patient in dry blankets, and rub the limbs upwards energetically. Promote the warmth of the body by hot flannels, bottles or bladders of hot water, heated bricks, to the pit of the stomach, the armpits, and to the soles of the feet.

On the restoration of life, when the power of swallowing has returned, a teaspoonful of warm water, small quantities of wine, warm brandy and water, or coffee should be given. The patient should be kept in bed, and a disposition to sleep encouraged. During reaction, large mustard plasters to the chest and below the shoulders will greatly relieve the distressed breathing.

Note.—In all cases of prolonged immersion in cold water when the breathing continues, a warm bath should be employed to restore the temperature.



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