

SIX INCHES 'OF STEEL.

DEADLY ACCURACY OF A BOWIE-KNIFE IN A HAND-TO-HAND CONFLICT.

A Weapon that Never Misses Fire if You Know How to Use It—How to Avoid a Fatal Thrust.

In a dusty corner of the office at Woodward's Gardens, says the San Francisco Examiner, hangs an old bowie knife. The blade is long and heavy and the rough handle is weighted to balance it. It has been there for years and years, and if there is any story connected with it it has been forgotten long ago.

A reporter, looking at the old relic, suggested that the time for such weapons had passed.

"That wouldn't be of much use in these days of double action six-shooters, would it?" said the newspaper man. "Another thing is



A Surprise.

that there is so little to be learned about handling a knife. Men are pretty nearly equal when you put a knife in the hand of each."

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Ohlms. "More men carry knives than you think, and I know lots of those who, at a distance inside of 20 feet could beat any man, except an expert, with a pistol, and even the expert would find it hard work to get away with them. As to the question of skill there is as great a difference between



Stopping a Thrust.

men in handling knives as there is in fencing. You can judge how skillful men may become when you know that some of the celebrated knife duels lasted for hours—and the men trying to cut each other all the time—before one went under. I'm not an expert, but if you like I'll show you a little of the science of the knife.

"The first thing, of course, is to have a knife you can depend on. It must be just the right weight, perfectly balanced, slender enough to penetrate easily, and set so strong as to go through an inch board without breaking. Such a knife is easily worth \$20 or \$30, and no gold or silver filigree on it, either."

"A double edge is the best, isn't it?"

"Not to my opinion. I'll show you why."



A Chopping.

He produced a couple of common knives, one double edged and one bowie.

"Now, lunge at me," said Mr. Ohlms. The newspaper man, with the two-edged weapon, did as he was bid.

"Now, I'll thrust, and you try the same thing."

"When the bowie came the other knife went down on its smooth back. The edge of the dagger was dented again, but it slipped right off the bowie."

"You hold your knife like the stage swayer," said Ohlms. "That's wrong for half a dozen reasons. You should take it just as you would a sword. In the first place you lose reach, and in the second place, if I can grab your wrist or get my hand over yours, you are helpless, and if I



Another Step.

am strong enough I can force your hand down and stab you with your own knife. That's the way Porfirio Gomez killed an Italian gambler at Colera Pass. Gomez was entirely unarmed, and the fare-dealer came for him. The Mexican was very strong and as quick as a cat, and before the Italian knew what was up his knife, with his own hand still grasping the handle, was into him up to the hilt.

"Besides you can't throw a knife from that position, and in a row you always want to be ready to do that. Another thing you must not do is wave your knife or fence like you would do with a sword. Move your hand as much and as quickly as your please, but keep the point directly towards your adversary. The Mexicans, and I guess they know more about handling knives than any other people on earth, keep the point directly toward the other man's eyes. They keep it circling about like a flash of fire, compelling the other man to keep his eyes on it. They work around quicker and quicker until they see a chance, and then down goes the knife quicker than the eye can follow it."

"Yes, but if I keep my knife ready how can you help running onto it?"



Under the Guard.

"Well, just try, and I'll show you." The two took their positions with wooden knives and Ohlms' knife point began to dance before the reporter's eyes. A few sec-

onds of this during which Ohlms constantly shifted his position, then the man who understood knives dashed his hat into his opponent's face, and at the same instant brought his knife against his breast.

"That is an old trick," he said. "A man must do it awful quick. His adversary must not see his hand move to his hat. That hand must go even faster than the one that holds the knife."

"How would you avoid that, if someone tried it on you?"

"By jumping sideways, backward or dodging. Fighting with knives is like boxing and everything else. Every attack has its



Result of a Rush.

defence, but the quickest and coolest man can, of course, sometimes get in a thrust even if the other man knows how it ought to be stopped—like La Blanche's swing that knocked Dempsey out. I remember a case. Lightning Jake was about as good a knife man as I ever saw. He beat numbers of great fighters. Well, one day a young fellow got into a dispute with him, and both drew their knives. Jake had fought so many good men that he was always looking for fancy work and the young fellow poked out like a farmer and got him.

"Now I'll show you how to meet a thrust. Let drive!"



A Maroon Trick.

Out went the reporter's blade. Ohlms caught his arm on his knife, and with the left hand knocked the blow down and the reporter's weapon down to the floor.

"That would have disabled your fighting arm," said Ohlms, "besides disarming you. Another way of stopping that down thrust is this:—This time just as the knife touched Ohlms' body he brought his own

down fall on the other's wrist. Almost the same moment he struck the back of his blade heavily with his left hand.

"That would come pretty near cutting off your hand," he said.

"Probably a safer way than either," he resumed, "is simply to catch you about the biceps muscles when you strike. That will stop your hand quick enough."

"Well, how would you get the thrust in?"

"I would try to get so low that you could not reach me."

"Well, if I did that how would you avoid it?"

"I'd simply drop to the floor, and then you could not get under my guard. As you see, there is a way to stop everything, and the quickest man wins. You keep your man's eyes on the point of your knife, and then you have to decide how to fight. You may be able to run past him on one side, and stick your knife into his side as you go."

"Twisting Dan's best trick was a good one. He would dodge around his man, suddenly grab his knife arm by the elbow, twist him around, with the jerk and stab him in the back. He made a grab at a slippery little chap once, though, and missed the elbow, and his friend buried him right there. A favorite attack is to catch your adversary's arm between your arm and your body, and while you pinion him in this shape drive your knife in between his shoulder blades. You usually aim for his neck or the armpit nearest you, where there are no bones to interfere. The stomach is, of course, the best place to reach a man to end him, but you want to keep as far from your adversary as possible, so you attack the nearest spot."

"Another trick that has caught many a



Knife Against Pistol.

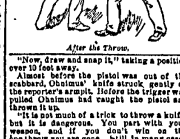
good man is this: You retreat before your adversary's attack, and at last start to run. If he runs after you, you increase your pace until you are sure he cannot stop. Then you drop directly in his path and either hold your knife so he will run into it or let him fall over you and as he turns stab him in the back.

"Letting down onto the floor is a pretty safe thing to do in a knife fight if you are on the defensive. You can pivot on one knee, and a cool man with a knife in that position is awful hard to get at. The only thing to do is to get down too, and fight it out on the ground."

"You spoke of a knife against a revolver. Do you mean to say you could get away with me if I wanted to shoot you?"

"Try it," said Ohlms.

The reporter strapped on a revolver.



After the Throw.

"Now, draw and snap it," taking a position over 10 feet away.

Almost before the pistol was out of the scabbard, Ohlms' knife struck gently on the reporter's armpit. Before the trigger was pulled Ohlms had caught the pistol and thrown it up.

"It is not much of a trick to throw a knife, but it is dangerous. You parry with your weapon, and if you don't win on the toss throw you are gone. Still in many cases that is the only chance, and it has won lots of times."

"There is a Mexican over in San Quentin now who killed two men by throwing his knife. One came for him with a pistol and the other had a Winchester rifle."

"A rifle?"

"Oh, yes. That is easier to beat with a knife than a pistol at close range. In a room, for instance, an expert with a knife would have an advantage of a man with a rifle. A quick man would not even have to throw his knife. Before the fellow with the rifle could

aim and fire he could dodge and come up under the rifle barrel and throw it up.

"Don't you let anybody tell you that the knife is no good. A clever man will do more



Better than a Rifle.

with it than with a pistol, and it never misses fire."