

CHAPTER II

MOVEMENTS KNOWN AS FIRST POSITION AND OPENING A—FIGURES BEGINNING WITH OPENING A—AN APACHE DOOR—FIGHTING HEAD-HUNTERS—A SUNSET—OSAGE DIAMONDS—OSAGE TWO DIAMONDS—DRESSING A SKIN—A FISH-SPEAR—A SEA-SNAKE—A KING FISH—BAGOBO DIAMONDS—BAGOBO TWO DIAMONDS

FIRST POSITION

THE following movements put the loop on the hands in what for convenience may be called the First Position. Very many string games begin in this way; and the movements should be learned now, as we shall not repeat the description with every figure.

First: Put the little fingers into the loop of string, and separate the hands.

You now have a single loop on each little finger passing directly and uncrossed to the opposite little finger.

Second: Turning the hands with the palms away from you, put each thumb into the little finger loop from below, and pick up on the back of the thumb the near little finger string; then, allowing the far little finger string to remain on the

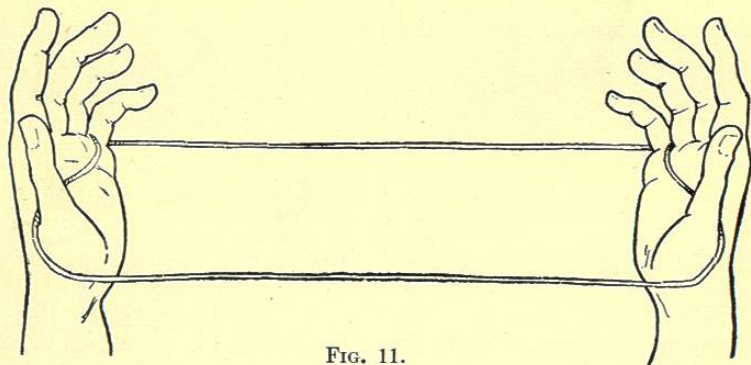


FIG. 11.

little finger, turn the hands with the palms facing each other, return the thumbs to their extended position, and draw the strings tight (Fig. 11).

In the First Position, therefore, there is, on each hand, a string which crosses the palm, and passing behind the thumb runs to the other hand to form the near thumb string of the figure, and passing behind the little finger runs to the other hand to form the far little finger string.

OPENING A

It is not essential that the loop shall be put on the hands by the movements just described; any method will answer, so long as the proper position of the string is secured. This method, however, has been found to be as easy as any other. The First Position is, of course, absurdly simple, yet it not infrequently puzzles the beginner, largely because it is the reverse of the first steps in the ordinary English Cat's-Cradle known to every child.

OPENING A

More than half of the string figures described in this book open in the same way; to avoid constant repetition therefore, we may follow Drs. Rivers and Haddon (p.

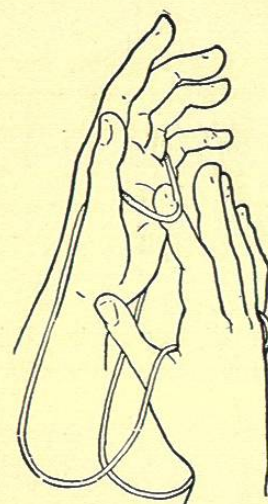


FIG. 12.

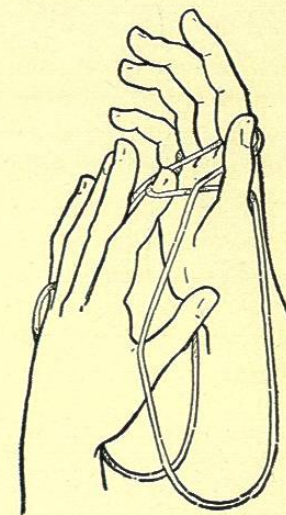


FIG. 13.

148), and call this very general method of beginning Opening A. It should be learned now, because in the descriptions of the figures in which it occurs, the first movement will be simply noted as Opening A. It is formed by three movements.

First: Put the loop on the hands in the First Position.

Second: Bring the hands together, and put the right index up under the string which crosses the left palm (Fig. 12), and draw the loop out on the back of the finger by separating the hands.

Third: Bring the hands together again, and put the left index up under that part of the string crossing the palm of the right hand which is between the strings on the right index (Fig. 13), and draw the loop out on the back of the left index by separating the hands.

You now have a loop on each thumb, index, and little finger (Fig. 14). There is a near thumb string and a far little finger string passing directly from one hand to the other, and two crosses formed between them by the near little finger string of one hand becoming the far index string of the other hand, and the far thumb string of one hand becoming the near index string of the other hand.

In forming many of the figures beginning with Opening A it is absolutely necessary to follow the order just given, and take up, first, the left palmar string with the right index, and then the right palmar string with the left index; it will save trouble, therefore, if this order be always followed, even if it make no difference in

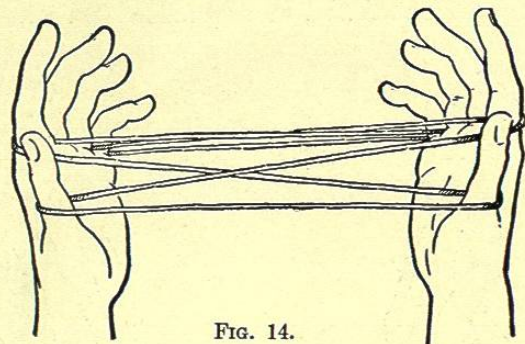


FIG. 14.

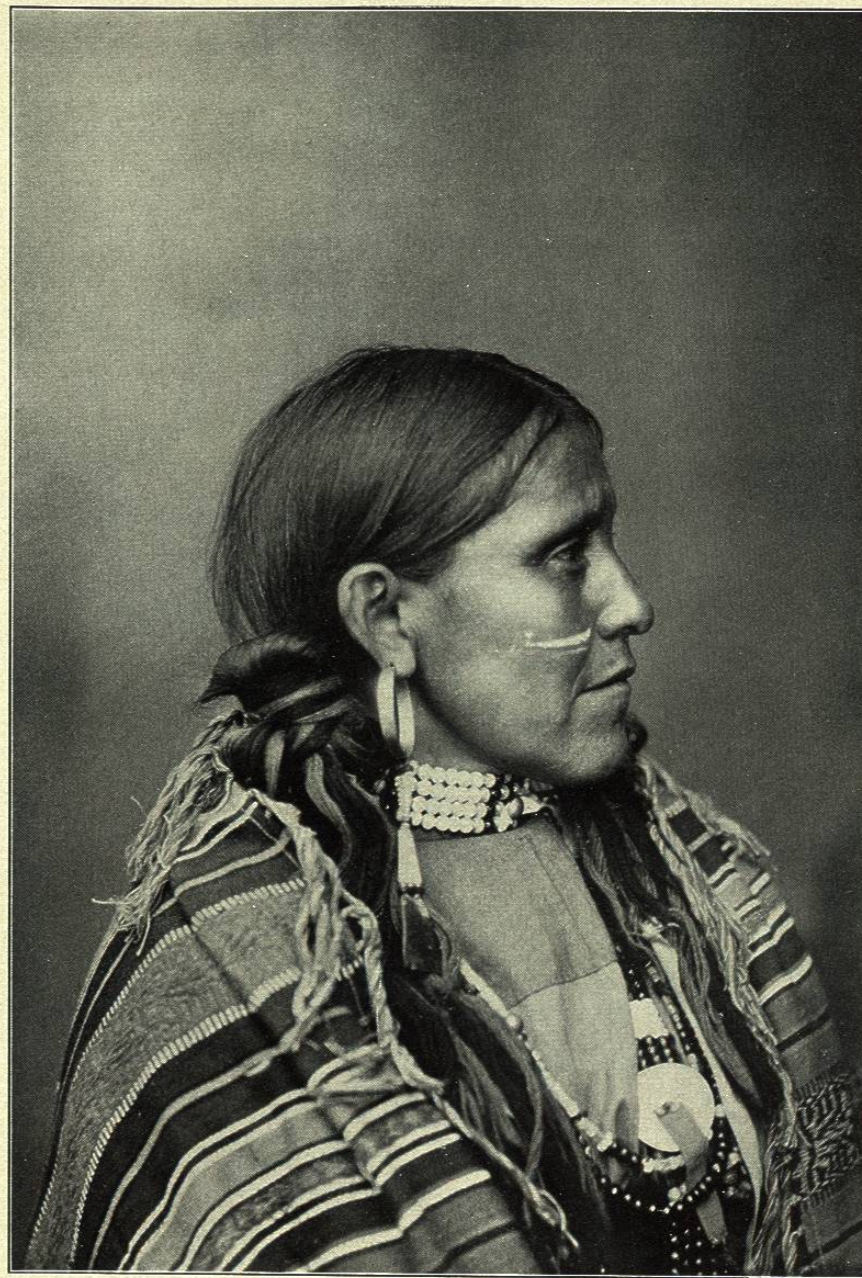
the result. If the reverse of this order is ever required, of course it will be noted in the description.

AN APACHE DOOR

This figure was taught to me by an Apache girl, Lena Smith, from Jicarilla, New Mexico, at the St. Louis Exposition in September, 1904. Lena spoke very little English and touched a door to signify the name of the figure. I could not get from her the Apache name. She was much amused at my blunders. A Navaho girl told me that all Indians know this figure. In the Philadelphia Free Museum of Science and Art, there are four examples of the finished figure collected by Mr. Stewart Culin and preserved on cards: (1) *Li-sis* = a Poncho, 22722, Navaho, from St. Michael's Mission, Arizona; (2) *Pi-cho-wai-nai*, 22604, Zuñi, New Mexico; (3) *Pi-cho-wai, a-tslo-no-no-nai* = a Sling, 22610, Zuñi, New Mexico, and (4), 22729, from Isleta, New Mexico.

First: Opening A.

Second: With the right thumb and index pick up the left near index string close to the left index, and lift the loop entirely off the left index; then put the loop over the left hand and let it drop down on the left wrist. With the left thumb and index pick up the right near index string close to the right index, and lift the loop entirely off the right index; then put the loop over the right hand and let it drop down



LENA SMITH, A JICARILLA APACHE.
(Courtesy of Mr. S. C. Simms.)

on the right wrist. Separate the hands and draw the strings tight. You now have a loop on each thumb, a loop on each little finger, and a loop on each wrist (Fig. 15).

Third: With the right thumb and index pick up the left near little finger string (not the whole loop) close to the left little finger, and, drawing it toward you,

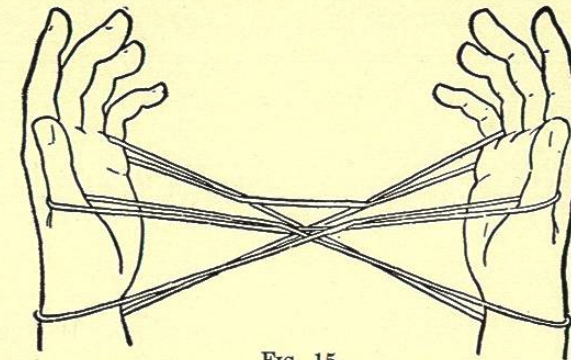


FIG. 15.

pass it between the left index and thumb, and release it. With the right thumb and index pick up the left far thumb string close to the left thumb, and, drawing it away from you, pass it between the left ring and little fingers, and release it.

With the left thumb and index pick up the right near little finger string close to the right little finger, and, drawing it toward you, pass it between the right index and thumb, and release it. With the left thumb and index pick up the right far

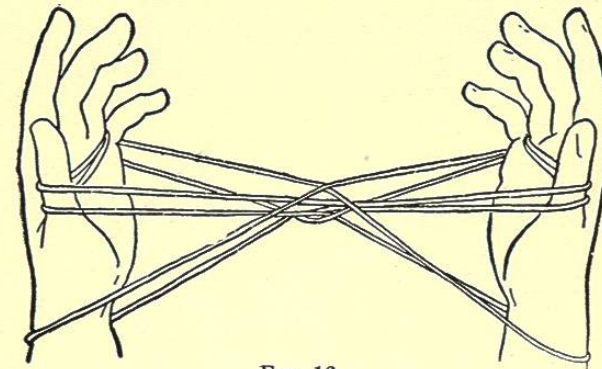


FIG. 16.

thumb string close to the right thumb, and, drawing it away from you, pass it between the right ring and little fingers, and release it.

You now have a loop on each wrist, and two strings crossing each palm in the First Position (Fig. 16).

Fourth: Keeping all the loops in position on both hands, with the left hand grasp tightly all the strings where they cross in the centre of the figure, and pass this collection of strings from left to right between the right thumb and index, that is, from the palmar side to the back of the hand, and let them lie on the back of the hand midway between the thumb and index finger (Fig. 17). Then with the left thumb and index take hold of the two loops already on the right thumb, and, without pulling them out, draw them over the tip of the right thumb (Fig. 18). Now, still holding the loops, let the collection of strings lying low down between the right index and thumb, slip over the right thumb to the palmar side. The right thumb is now entirely free. Without untwisting the two original right thumb loops, which you are still holding with the left thumb and index, replace these loops on the right thumb exactly as they were before the collected strings were placed between the right index and thumb (Fig. 19). Separate the hands, and draw the strings tight.

Now repeat exactly the same movement on the left hand as follows: Keeping all the loops in position on both hands, with the right hand grasp tightly all the strings where they cross in the centre of the figure, and pass this collection of strings from right to left between the left index and thumb, that is, from the palmar side to the back of the hand, and let them lie on the back of the hand midway between the index and thumb; then with the right thumb and index take hold of the two loops already on the left thumb and, without pulling them out, draw them over the tip of the left thumb. Now, still holding these loops, let the collection of strings lying low down between the left index and thumb, slip over the left thumb to the palmar side. The left thumb is now entirely free.

Without untwisting the two original left thumb loops, which you are still holding with the right thumb and index, replace these loops on the left thumb exactly as they were before the collected strings were placed between the left index and thumb. Separate the hands, and draw the strings tight.

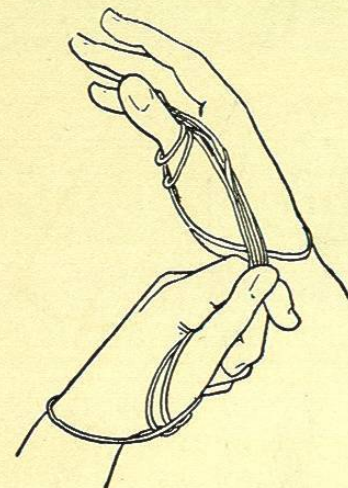


FIG. 17.

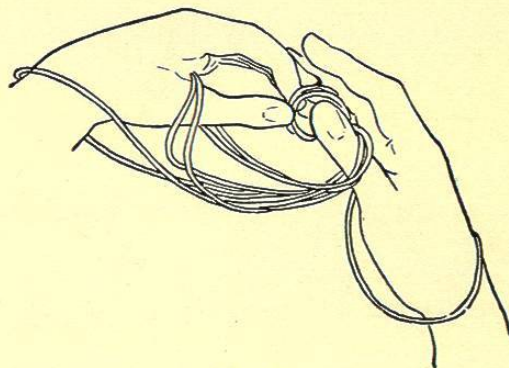


FIG. 18.

You now have a loop on each wrist, two twisted loops on each thumb, and two twisted loops on each little finger (Fig. 20).

Fifth: With the right thumb and index lift the left wrist loop from the back of the left wrist up over the tips of all the left fingers, and let it fall on the palmar side. With the left thumb and index lift the right wrist loop from the back of the right wrist up over the tips of all the right fingers, and let it fall on the palmar side.

Sixth: Retaining the loops on the thumbs and little fingers, rub the palms of the hands together; then separate the hands, and draw the figure tight (Fig. 21).

This is a beautiful figure, and not at all difficult. Moreover it retains its shape no matter how tight you may pull it. It contains several interesting movements:

In the *Second*, the method of transferring the index loops to the wrists is unusual; as we shall see further on, a more complicated method is almost always employed. In the *Third* movement the changing of a string from one finger to another by means of the thumb and index of the other hand is a process not often observed. Indeed one may easily believe that the methods given in these two movements are short cuts peculiar to the individual who taught me the figure, and that,

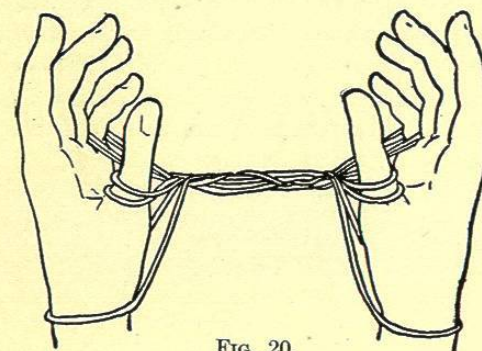


FIG. 20.

some day, other Indians will be seen doing these movements in the usual elaborate style, whereby the strings on either hand are shifted and arranged by the fingers of that hand only. As far as I know, the *Fourth* movement has not been observed in any other string figure. The rubbing of the hands together in the

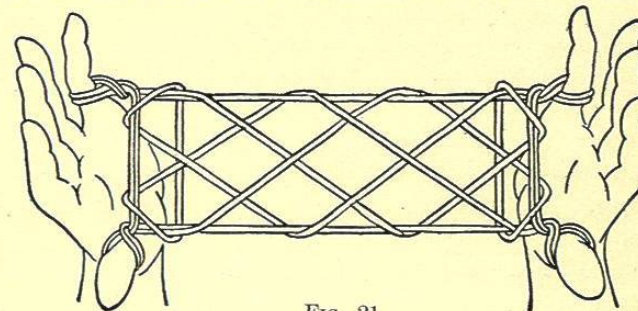


FIG. 21.

Sixth movement is, of course, only for effect; it has no bearing on the success of the figure. The manner of showing the finished pattern, what we call its "extension," is of the most simple type; indeed the figure practically extends itself when the hands are drawn apart.



FIGHTING HEAD-HUNTERS



This figure was taught to me by Dr. Haddon in August, 1904. He obtained it when on the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits; it is described by Rivers and Haddon (p. 150). In Mer (Murray Island), Torres Straits, it is called *Ares* = Murray and Dauar men fighting. One twisted loop of the finished figure represents the Murray man, who always carries off the Dauar man's head.

First: Opening A.

Second: Bend each little finger toward you over all the strings except the near thumb string, and then down into the thumb loop, and pick up on the back of the

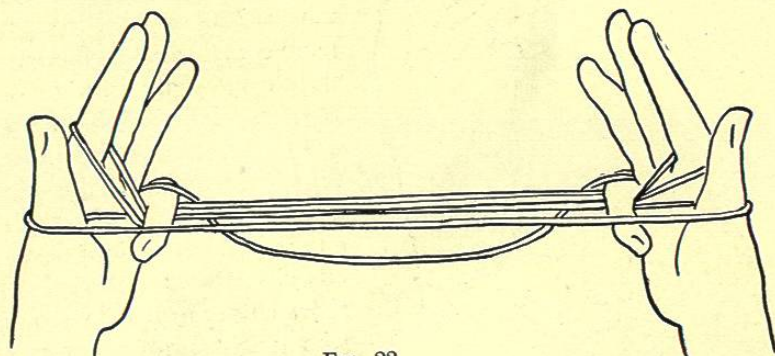
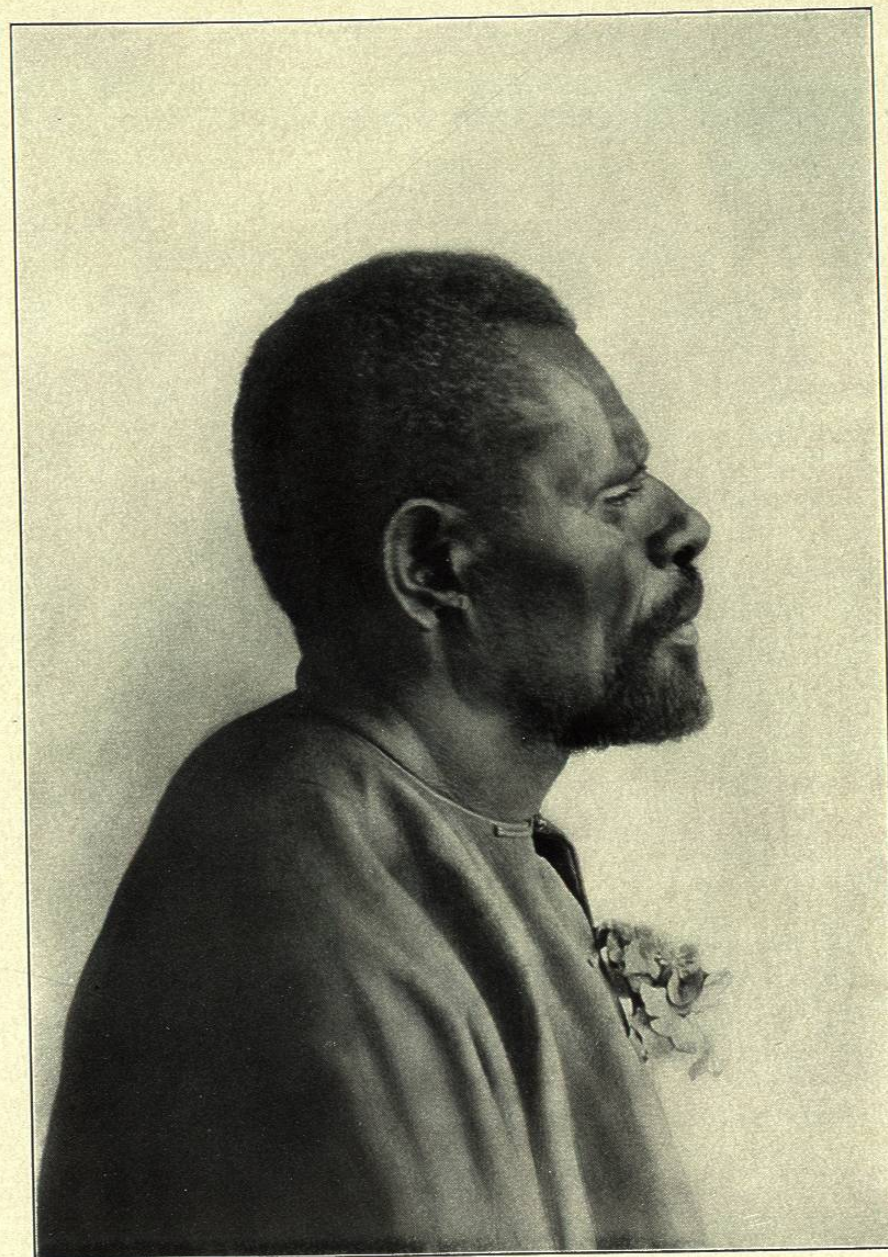


FIG. 22.

little finger the near thumb string (Fig. 22), and return the little finger to its original position, taking the thumb loop entirely off the thumb. You now have a single loop on each index and two loops on each little finger (Fig. 23).

Third: Pass each thumb away from you under the index loop, and take up from below on the back of the thumb the two near little finger strings, and return the thumb to its position (Fig. 24). Release the loops from the little fingers.

Fourth: Bend each little finger toward you over the index loop, and take up from below on the back of the finger the two far thumb strings (Fig. 25, Left hand),



PASI, A MAMOOSE, OR CHIEF, OF DAUAR, TORRES STRAITS.
See Haddon's *Head Hunters: Black, White and Brown*.
(Courtesy of Dr. A. C. Haddon.)

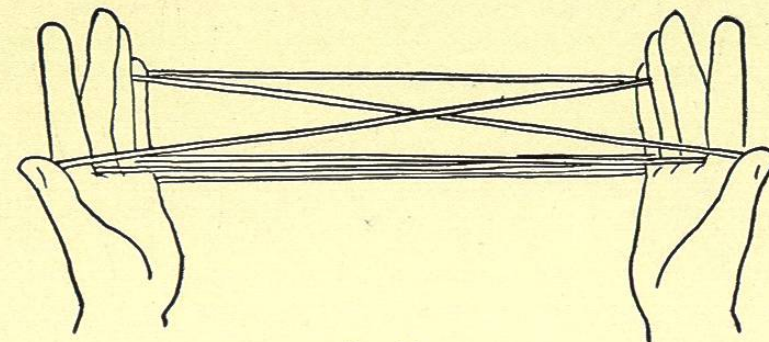


FIG. 23.

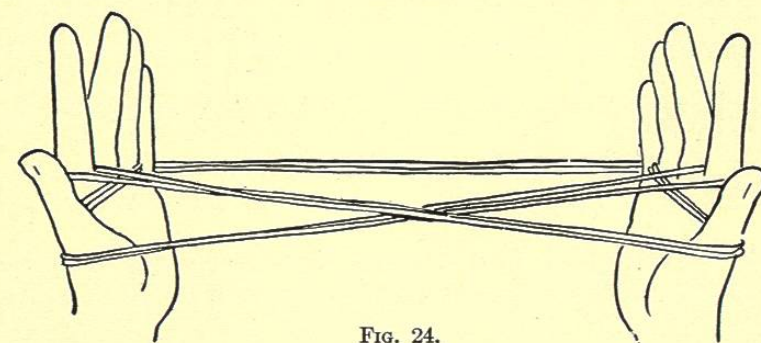


FIG. 24.

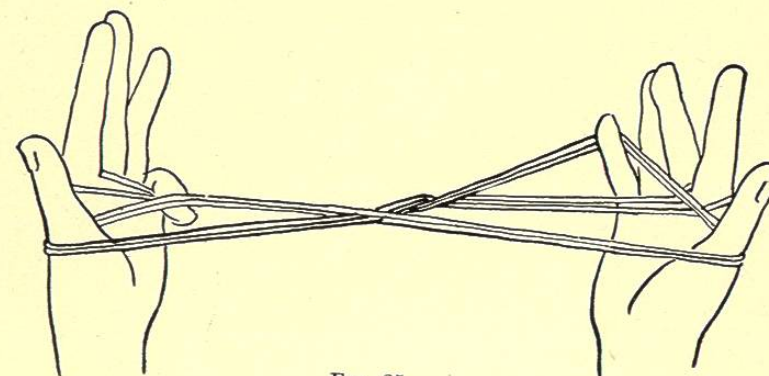


FIG. 25.

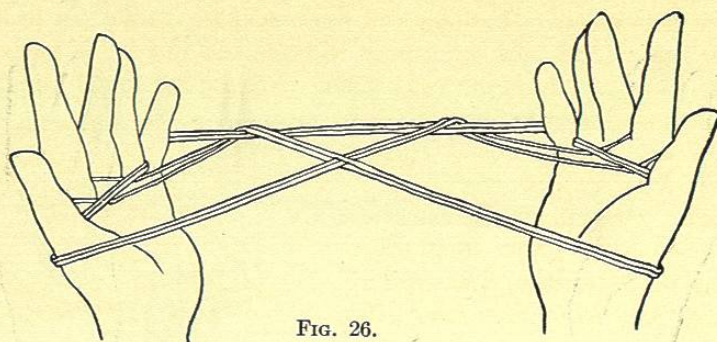


FIG. 26.

and return the little finger to its position, retaining the loops on the thumb (Fig. 25, Right hand).

Fifth: In the centre of the figure there is now a distinct triangle formed of double strings (Fig. 26).

Insert the tip of each index from below into this triangle, and, pulling out the sides of the triangle on the backs of the index fingers (Fig. 27), separate the hands. You should now have two loops on each thumb, two loops on each little finger, and three loops on each index, one at the base of the finger and two together near the tip (Fig. 28).

Sixth: Keeping all the strings securely on the right hand, with the right thumb and index lift the lower left single index loop over the two upper left index loops (Fig. 29), and over the tip of the left index, and let it

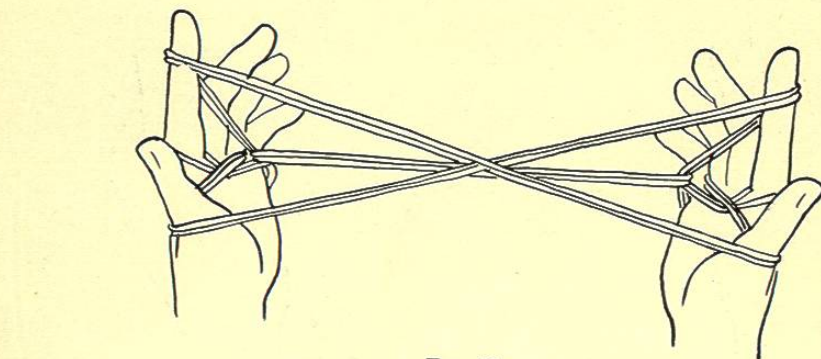


FIG. 27.

FIG. 28.

fall on the palmar side. In doing this movement be careful not to let the loops slip off the right fingers. In like manner with the left thumb and index remove the lower right index loop from the right index. Release the loops from the thumbs. The two loops which are now on each index and little finger are bound together not far from the palm (Fig. 30).

Seventh: Twist tightly the two loops on each index finger about three times, by rotating the index away from you (or by dropping the loops from the index and twisting them with the thumb and index).

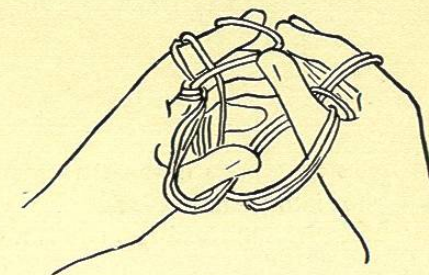


FIG. 29.

Eighth: The loops should now be dropped from the index (if this has not been already done to twist them with the thumb and index) and the figure turned so that these twisted index loops shall hang down. With the left little finger pull

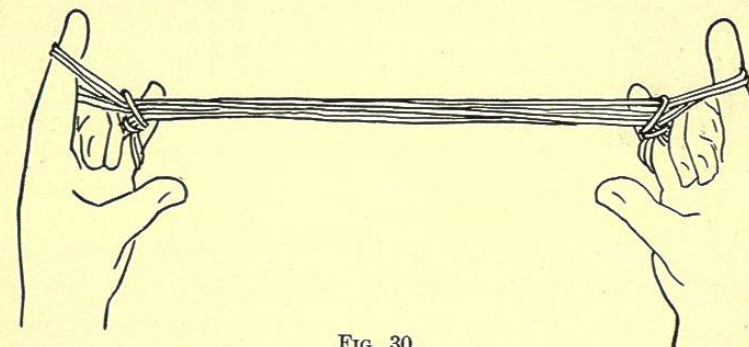


FIG. 30.

gently on the left near little finger strings, which will cause the right twisted hanging loops (one head-hunter) to move toward the other hanging loops (the other head-hunter) (Fig. 31); then they meet, and by jerking the left hand strings slightly

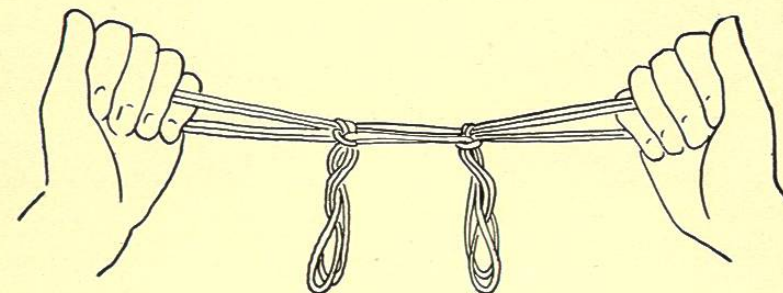


FIG. 31.