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# Fencing Applied to the Military Art

*Citoyen Bertrand*

Translated from *L'Escrime, Appliquée à l'Art Militaire* (1801) by [Chris Slee](#),  
[LongEdge Press](#), 2023.

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## Foreword

Citoyen Bertrand was a fencing master teaching in Paris at the time of the Revolution, and is one of the group who dedicated their service to the State when the Corporation of the Masters of Arms of Paris was abolished in 1792. The Archives of the Masters of Arms of Paris lists him and his son, fencing master François-Joseph, living at 31 rue Beauregard in 1821 and at 367 rue Saint-Denis in 1822. I cannot find out much more than this. There are plenty of unflattering stories about Bertrand, junior, despite his significant contribution to founding the modern sport.

The value of the text for HEMA fencers and those interested in the history of fencing is twofold. Firstly, this represents one of the earliest texts in French to describe training people to fight with sabres. It fits almost in the centre of the period known as the Consulate, between the fall of the Revolutionary Directorate in 1799, after a series of embarrassing military defeats, the establishment of the Empire under Napoleon Bonaparte ("Consul for Life") in 1804.

Secondly, it shows how fencing training bridged the gap between personal instruction for one-on-one combat and the development of skill and tactics for sections, platoon and companies of soldiers. This is an aspect of the discipline which is rarely found elsewhere in the history of fencing texts.

The text is from the scans released by Fédération Française des Arts Martiaux Historiques Européens (FFAMHE). That PDF can be found here: <https://www.ffamhe.fr/collectionpalas/escrime-militaire-bertrand.pdf>.

### Fencer's Notes

The text uses the almost modern hand and weapons positions where prime is hilt high/point low on the inside line, seconde is hilt high/point low on the outside line, tierce is hilt low/point high on the outside line, and quarte is hilt low point high on the inside line.

### Translator's Notes

Fencing terms in the text which are still used today have been left untranslated. To translate them would confuse the reader. Where choices in translation have been made, the original text has been footnoted so that readers can develop alternate readings. Interpolations made to enhance the clarity of the English text are enclosed in square brackets, [ ].

# Fencing Applied to the Military Art

By Citizen BERTRAND, Master of Arms.

Paris

From the print shop of J-B. HÉRAULT, Printer of Military Training Materials,  
rue de Harlay, in the Marais, N°. 337.

Year 9.<sup>1</sup>

## Table

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This book is sold at the house of the AUTHOR, rue Pirouette, N° 18, near  
the Small Pillars of Les Halles. Paris.

Price: 1 fr. 50 c.

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<sup>1</sup>The Year 9 of the Revolutionary Calendar equates to 1801

## Introduction

The epitome of Fencing is speed in all its qualities and, although an assault of arms is a string of deceptions,<sup>2</sup> it is nevertheless necessary that the calculation behind the movements and their execution follow each other with rapidity. Thus, in action, the physical and intellectual faculties must not only be exerted but exerted in such harmony that the members of the body can execute as quickly as the imagination conceives. This exercise must be presented in two aspects: the development of the body, and the handling of the weapon. The first is essential because, in a fight with the sword<sup>3</sup> in which a man must be in action from head to toe,<sup>4</sup> he needs strength to resist, but without stiffness in order to act with springlike movements. One cannot acquire these means without first developing the body in all its parts, to free the joints of the arms and legs, and strengthen the muscular parts, making the circulation of blood to them more copious, through the exercise of these extremities. The second must be considered as the summary of the sword exercises. Yet, independently of making known all the movements suitable for the offensive and the defensive, it is still necessary to agree that strikes with the point are struck more quickly than strikes with the edge. They require less effort and expose less in that they reach farther and are much more dangerous.

Nothing is more difficult in the practice of the sabre than to deliver a cutting blow which achieves the target, because it is necessary to get sufficiently close to reach approximately the middle of the blade, to make a large movement to give force to the blow so that the cutting edge falls perpendicularly and with a sawlike cut. This is only practicable against a man who uses little defence. We also often see soldiers, after having received a number of blows, withdraw without being out of action.

If the Soldier of all arms<sup>5</sup> is not familiarised in advance with the practice of his respective weapons, he cannot take full advantage of them. Thus, it is not enough to make the Infantryman cross his bayonet (which performs the function of the sword), nor to make the cavalryman draw the sabre to command [soldiers] in a charge, especially since this movement leads them to fight in the melee and, there, they are obliged to use the sword when there is no longer any ability to step or counter step. Leader and Soldier, everything is confused. Everyone left to their own devices needs to have more than just the courage of resignation, waiting for the shot. Strength must unite with skill and bravery to follow the enemy in all his movements and to reason out

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<sup>2</sup>*continuité de ruse*

<sup>3</sup>*L'arme blanche* is generally translated here as “sword” for convenience and readability.

<sup>4</sup>lit: *depuis l'orteil jusqu'aux cheveux*

<sup>5</sup>ie: infantry, cavalry, etc

the attack and the defence, even in the middle of the carnage.

This is the aim of my work and, to accelerate the progress of the Instruction, the exercise will be accompanied by a theory which will instruct the Students in the cause of all the movements which they will be made to practice.

I have briefly gone through the principles of Fencing, before demonstrating some attacks which will show the difference which exists between single combat<sup>6</sup> and that which takes place in a general action. Then, I established Manoeuvres to lead the Soldier into the melee, because it is only by often presenting a simulation of the danger to the Students, by exercising them in the means of attacking and defending, that little by little we prepare them for it and will make them acquire this essential quality: presence of mind in action. Finally, I made the positions and movements of the sword capable of being controlled through time, like the manoeuvring of the musket and the cannon.

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<sup>6</sup>*le combat particulier*

# **Fencing Applied to the Military Art**

## **Instruction**

Poise. Precision. Speed. This is what must occupy the Teacher throughout the course of this Instruction. Poise is the foundation in that it constitutes firmness in the movements of the body. Precision is the set of movements combined for speed and the directing of the weapon. Speed, although born more or less with us, cannot be brought to its true point of energy other than through principles taught regularly and executed rigorously.

## **Development of the Body**

The body will be exercised in three distinct positions:

### **First Position**

The body standing without being absolutely in profile on the side of the action, the head straight, clear of the shoulders, the face supported, slightly raised and turned towards the action, the chest withdrawn and drawn back to put the shoulder blades into their sockets, the arms fall along the body without affected movement, the thighs tensed, the feet forming a square and heel of the first between the ankle and the heel of the other. To order this attitude, we will introduce it with these words: FIRST POSITION. The word ONE will be used to have it executed.

### **Second Position**

Raise and extend the arms, removing them from the body and without stiffening them, the one on the side of the action to chest height; the other, the hand a little above the shoulder line, open, the palm towards the head, rounding it from the wrist joint to the ends of the fingers. Bend the thighs, bringing the foot forward approximately one foot length from the other and without moving it off the straight line, leaving the knees bent and supported outside, and the body well supported on the legs, that is to say, the left leg is not more loaded than the right. To instruct on placing themselves in this second position, we will pronounce the words EN GUARD and, on the word TWO, the Students will place themselves there. Then, we will make the Students advance and withdraw in this attitude, which is called NARROWING or BREAKING THE MEASURE. When advancing, first step the right foot one foot length, and follow with the left. When stepping backwards, make this one [ie: the left foot] step and the other after, without moving the arms or the body.

### Third Position

Extend the right arm in a straight line, drop the left on the same line about a foot from the thigh. We will again carry the right foot forward and away from the other about three and a half foot lengths, close to the ground, with the thigh bent so that, when in place, the leg is perpendicular to the foot. The other is to be lengthened while holding the foot on the ground and supporting the thigh well extended in the lunge.<sup>7</sup> The torso will be inclined towards the action. These words DEVELOP THE LUNGE,<sup>8</sup> will be the announcement. The word THREE will have the Students launch to this position. In this position, we will lean the upper body forward and backward, without disturbing the legs, and, before returning to guard, we will raise the arms several times in a row, using a rotational movement. When we have practised these three positions on the right, we will practice them on the left.

This development should be exercised with exactitude. The first position requires little effort, but the second is painful. The feet, placed square to support the body, must stay on the ground with the compressibility of the legs so that the body is not disturbed by the movements of the arms. The legs, bent to provide elasticity in the lunge, give tension to the nerves, solidifying the muscular parts and releasing the joints of the knees and those of the ankles. The wrists, extended horizontally, cause the shoulders to bear the weight of the lever, strengthening the arms. The head raised, the chest withdrawn, and the kidneys supported, form the structure of the body. The Student will find himself very uncomfortable<sup>9</sup> in this attitude, given the small distance that exists between the feet. But the more they do it, the less it pains, and, after three or four lessons performed with care, the Student will only have to spread his feet an inch more apart. He will find himself more at ease, and thus [move] progressively into the middle position (explained to the manoeuvres) in which he will be strong. The lunge of the third position exercises the hips, gives spring to the thighs and forces the body to acquire balance without the help of the arms. To retreat from this position to the second, three things will have to be observed: 1° bring the arm to the second position, 2° bend the thigh which was stretched, 3° pull the upper body back. These three movements made from the same spring, the retreat will be executed with ease. In the beginning, the Teacher will support the arms, place the feet well, and make the Student remain a little time in each position until he manages to place himself there alone and remain fixed there. When moving the arms in the lunge, a lot of flexibility is required and, above all, that the Student lowers the shoulder blades, to make the articulation of the

The effect of this development

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<sup>7</sup>Bertrand uses the term *l'écart* to signify the explosive forward movement of the lunge.

<sup>8</sup>DÉVELOPPEZ L'ÉCART

<sup>9</sup>*très-gêné*

shoulder free. This development of the body is not only essential for the use of the sword but it prepares it for the particular instruction of the Soldier of all arms [of the military]. It is suitable for the Infantryman for manoeuvring his musket. It gives much ease to the Artilleryman for the essential time of swabbing, prepares the Sailor to find his balance on the vessel, and trains the Cavalryman for action. Because, if he acted with stiffness in his arms, apart from the fact that he would not make good use of his sabre, he would give jolts to his horse which, docile to all movements, would make contrary indications,<sup>10</sup> which would be very harmful to it.

Finally, before exercising with the weapon in hand, it will be useful to observe that at the instruction DEVELOP THE LUNGE, the Student (so that all parts of the body are activated at the same time), must first lift the toes of the foot forward, to put them in concert with those of the hand which holds the weapon, and the upper body held by the heel only, pushing through the leg which must remain in place. Being put thus in order, immediately on the commandment THREE, everything will start at the same time.

The body must launch itself like the release of the bowstring

## The Mechanics of the Weapon

The Teacher will find out which hand the Student most habitually acts with to exercise him first on that side, then on the other, and he will be made to exercise this way alternately.

In giving the weapon to the Student, he will be made to distinguish the back of the blade on top and the edge on the bottom. We recommend that he feel the handle in the palm of the hand with his thumb lying along it, pressing it on the second phalanx of the index finger, and holding the pommel of the guard firmly with his ring and little fingers against the wrist joint.

Holding the weapon

We will give the weapon to the Student, in order to exercise him first on the most accustomed side so that he can understand more easily, since he will have more ease in operating it. It is recommended to feel the handle well in the hand, because this makes the weapon lighter, and we cannot succeed in making the point sparkle<sup>11</sup> without the weapon being well established in the hand. These observations would appear to be of little consideration for the musketeer, especially since he can only act with his musket, with his bayonet on the end, by holding it with both hands. But the habit of properly feeling the weapon, which constitutes its strength, means that by instilling in him the principles of the sword, we guide him in applying them to his musket, and making him understand the distance from which he needs to attack the enemy, since it is the same as for the sword or sabre of thirty to

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<sup>10</sup> *des temps contraires* contrary times or counter tempos?

<sup>11</sup> *pétiller*



thirty-three inches in length.

The sword or sabre fitted with a handle which is not proportionate to the hand is an obstacle to handling either one with dexterity, and if it exceeds the weight of a pound and a half, it paralyses, so to speak, the arm of even the most robust cavalryman. Among other precautions for the latter, it would be advisable for his sabre to be sharpened about three inches above the blade at the tip,<sup>12</sup> and that, below, it should be sharpened to the hilt. To prevent disarming, the blade should be also a little belted.<sup>13</sup> For, in the melee, one cannot have too many resources. So, when we strike with cuts, the weapon slides and slices, whereas a straight blade produces a lesser effect.

Construction of the sabre

An important observation to make again to the Student, before ordering any movement with the weapon, is to always have his gaze fixed towards the Teacher's head. This will force him to pay full attention. He must, moreover, force himself not to move his eyelids too often, nor to close his eyes at the different movements and impacts of the steel, for it fosters fear, distracts from the application, and harms presence of mind. The eyes must be trained to move as little as possible otherwise judgement will often be found to fail when fighting.

Exercising the eye

These observations made, the Teacher will order the first and second positions. The Student will execute them by directing the weapon towards the chest, the wrist placed with the thumb above and the arm extended without being tense. The Teacher will have a weapon similar to that of the Student. He will engage that of the latter by crossing the line, the wrist above the line of direction,<sup>14</sup> positioned to launch the weapon in front of him, that is to say, to the left, and the thumb inclined on the inside that which we will call PRIME ENGAGEMENT<sup>15</sup> (we must assume here the action on the right side). The weapons thus engaged, the Teacher will instruct the Student that on the word PRIME, this will be instruction for him to protect himself with the steel by holding it steady,<sup>16</sup> and to prepare to immediately attack the non-pressure, which will be the indication of the attack.<sup>17</sup> The Teacher will remain for five to six seconds before applying non-pressure. The Student will launch the strike with the extension from the elbow, and will direct it to the centre of the torso, developing the LUNGE, and will immediately retreat into

Simple attack movements

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<sup>12</sup>ie: along the back of the blade

<sup>13</sup>Referring to the wrist strap or martingale.

<sup>14</sup>The text has simply *la direction*. This and subsequent occurrences of the term indicate the imaginary straight line from the centre of the torso of one fencer to the centre of the torso of the opponent.

<sup>15</sup>*JONCTION PRIME*

<sup>16</sup>Original footnote: We will explain in the Summary how to attack this feeling.

<sup>17</sup>*Pressure* and *non-pressure* are used throughout to indicate the strength of the blade engagement. The way the terms are used are as clumsy in French as they are in English.

second position. The Teacher will make the SECONDE ENGAGEMENT,<sup>18</sup> that is to say he will again cross the weapon, having the wrist above the line of direction, but deviating to the right, and having the thumb inclined as in *prime*. He will instruct SECONDE and, after the above mentioned interval, will apply the non-pressure. The Student will develop the straight strike and immediately recover himself back on guard. For the TIERCE ENGAGEMENT,<sup>19</sup> the Teacher will cross the weapon in order to prepare himself to conduct it to the right, having the wrist under the line of direction and the thumb inclined as with the other two oppositions. He will instruct TIERCE . . . non-pressure. The Student will develop straight and will retreat. Finally, QUARTE ENGAGEMENT,<sup>20</sup> always with the wrist under the line of direction and positioned to launch to the left, having the thumb above. Instructing QUARTE . . . non-pressure, [the Student develops] the attack and retreats.

Below, we will demonstrate the attack with pressure. The weapons engaged in *prime*, instructing PRIME . . . pressure, the Student will detach the point of his weapon and pass it over, directing the attack to the target in the opening of the *seconde* line of opposition, and will retreat. *Seconde* engagement, instruct SECONDE . . . pressure, the attack is detached in *prime*, and immediately retreated. *Tierce* engagement, instruct . . . pressure, pass the point underneath and develop into the *quarte* line. *Quarte* engagement, instruct . . . pressure. Disengage and develop in *tierce*.

We observed above that the eyes are used for judgement. But it is also necessary to exercise feeling at the clash of blades in order to follow with the hand the movements of the weapon in action. For it is necessary to distinguish through feeling in which line of opposition we encounter the weapon, and, despite the rapidity of the movements, derive from it an indication of attack or defence, without any cost of calculation, as if the seat of sensations was in the hand. The engagement of the weapons will guide the Student here. Thus, he will have to realise the three intentions through the feeling in the steel,<sup>21</sup> at the moment the weapons are engaged. The first is to secure the weapon by pressing a little on it and also holding it without wavering, which characterises the man collected and ready for action. The second is to neglect this holding of the weapon. This negligence can be assumed to be inattention as a ruse. The third is to impulsively press the weapon, which announces taking the defensive since this pressure supposes the intention to disturb the orientation of the weapon.

Explanation of feeling

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<sup>18</sup> JONCTION SECONDE

<sup>19</sup> JONCTION TIERCE

<sup>20</sup> JONCTION QUARTE

<sup>21</sup> Bertrand talks of *le tact du fer* rather than the term modern fencers find more usual, *le sentiment du fer*

For the direction of the attack, which we aim at the centre of the torso, let us not forget that the straight line is the shortest. The point of the weapon and the arm must form a line at the first movement of the attack. But, the body lowering during the lunge, it will be necessary to make the step raising the wrist to keep it directed to the target, supporting the pommel of the guard against the wrist joint, and the thumb directly on it because, if we turned the handle to one side or another, the point would be deflected off the line, especially for the weapon which is loosely tied. In the first sessions, it will be necessary to support the Student's weapon in the line of direction, to relieve his excessive application, and then gradually let him adjust himself. When attacking with pressure, the disengaged strike should be launched as quickly as the straight strike. To do this, it is necessary, as soon as the pressure is applied, to make the tip evade by an imagined rocking movement, so to speak, in the fingers and this must be done at the same time as the extension of the elbow. Those who have difficulty practising this movement will achieve it by making a continuous small beats with the end of their blade on the Teacher's weapon, disengaging from right and left without moving the wrist, and doing this as quickly as possible. It will only be after having been thoroughly instilled with these principles of attack that we will move on to those of defence, because to teach one and the other together will confuse the student's head.

Means to properly direct the point of the weapon

To proceed to the defence, the Teacher will always engage the weapon and instruct. But the Student will make the attack signals and he will be made to distinguish the strong from the weak of the weapon. He will know that the strong is from the heel of the blade to the middle and the weak from the middle to the tip. Above all, he will know that whenever he has to carry out a defence, it will be up to him to give the attack signals.

Simple parry movements

The Student being on guard, the Teacher, by engaging the weapon, will instruct *prime* ... non-pressure of the Student. The Teacher will attack and the Student will oppose by maintaining the parry in the *prime* line of opposition. We will follow the same procedure, operating in *seconde*, *tierce*, and *quarte*. Then we will parry the attacks with pressure. The Teacher will initiate and instruct *prime*. The Student will apply pressure. The Teacher will detach the attacking strike in the *seconde* line and the Student, at the feeling of disengage, will promptly carry his weapon from the *prime* line to the *seconde* opposition. This will also be the case with the other three lines of opposition.

The position of the wrist for parrying as well as for attacking is the reckoning of the art. For the man without knowledge seeks to parry with the arm or the unarmed hand. If he wants to strike with the point, after having drawn

the sword or sabre, he does not place the wrist in front of him, he holds it high or low, drawing it back and very far from the centre. He grabs the hilt of the weapon with force and stiffness of the arm, and plunges or lifts the blow according to his inclination. After this demonstration, we must feel that it is the position and movement of the attack which determines and energises the parry.

Thus, aiming the attack in a straight line, the blow can only be diverted to the right or left, the wrist below or above the line of direction, and, by crossing the weapon, this makes four distinct movements. As the parry is more complicated than the attack, the Teacher will begin parrying, and will stop on the tempo of each opposition to remark to the Student that, when parrying, the wrist must be well supported in the opposition which is the line by which we direct the blow to the right or left of the body. The parry must be made with the strong of the blade, crossing the straight line to the target, and that the weapon is supported all along the wrist. To parry the disengaged strike with precision, it is necessary to ensure the weapon is held evenly, and to pay attention to the feeling of the steel, so that as soon as the disengagement is performed, the wrist springs from one point of opposition to the other.

How one must parry

When the Student has practised parries with a little facility and developed the attack, making movement of the wrist first, we will train him to riposte.

Riposte

Being ready to work, we will instruct PRIME . . . non-pressure. The Teacher will develop the straight attack. The Student will first oppose and then he will make a straight attack, which is called the RIPOSTE. The Teacher will parry this riposte and put himself on guard again. We will exercise this riposte by attacking the other lines of opposition as well as with the feeling of pressure.

Attacking well and parrying well separately is already a thing.<sup>22</sup> But perfection consists of passing from one to the other in a simultaneous movement, and it is only by practising to riposte that one can achieve this. The Student cannot occupy himself with the offensive and the defensive at the same time. If he is busy parrying the riposte, he will neglect the attack. To prevent this fault, it will be necessary for the Student, after the movement of the arm for the attack, to remain for an interval of two or three seconds, and for the Teacher to only remove the weapon from his *plastron* to riposte after the Student will have touched him, observing that he must oppose the riposte with only the feeling of the parry. When the Teacher wants to check if the Student is paying attention, as soon as the latter disengages, the Teacher will pretend to parry his attack, and see if he still hesitates to strike boldly,

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<sup>22</sup>*c'est déjà quelque chose*

before thinking about parrying the riposte.

Since opposition to the straight riposte could be considered as pressure, one could riposte by disengaging, but we will do it by cutting over point (explained below) in the lines of the *tierce* and *quarte* opposition.

The Teacher will engage in *quarte*, and will [engage using] the non-pressure. The Student will attack and oppose with the straight riposte. The Teacher will detach his weapon from the opposition, drawing it towards him as if to strike a blow and, passing his weapon over the point of that of the Student, he will direct the blow to strike a *tierce* riposte, and the Student will parry in *tierce*, making a retreat. Weapons engaged in *tierce* . . . non-pressure, attack, parry, oppose with the straight riposte, and disengage the weapon as above to riposte in the *quarte* line, and retreat parrying in *quarte*. The Teacher will make the Student practice this same riposte. Then he will make him a counter riposte in the following manner.

Cutting over the point

*Quarte* engagement . . . non-pressure, attack, opposition with the straight riposte. The Teacher, again simulating the head strike, will riposte in the *tierce* line. The Student, by retreating, will parry this riposte and will counter riposte by disengaging the strike in the *seconde* line, and this from the firm foot. That is to say, he will immediately repeat the attack strike, launched only from the wrist, holding his body fixed in the second position. *Tierce* engagement . . . non-pressure, attack, parry, opposition with the straight riposte. Cut to riposte in *quarte*, parry this riposte and disengage the counter riposte in the *prime* line.

Counter riposte

To riposte by cutting over the point, you will have to bend your elbow to the point of straining the muscular parts of the front and back of the arms to make this movement elastic. This strike will accustom the Student not to be thrown off by a large movement, and subsequently he will even conceive the idea of striking on the movement rather than responding to it with a parry. As this riposte of the *coupé* is not rendered vertically, it will be parried by maintaining the weapon and the wrist higher than the point in the *tierce* and *quarte* oppositions. This positioning of the parry will also make the Student feel that he will be able to parry a cutting blow if necessary and, this parry thus ended, will make it easier to release the counter riposte under the line of direction of the wrist. But, for this counter riposte to be delivered well, there must be firmness in the legs, the arm must be independent of the body and its joints free, the weapon well established in the hand to disengage it from the steel at the sensation of the parry, and, by a tight movement of the fingers, throw the point at the target.

When the Student practices all these movements regularly, he will exercise them without engaging weapons. Thus, we will instruct him that being on guard, he will prepare to attack or parry based at a glance since, in this

lesson, there will be no indication of feeling.

The Teacher will order the Student to be on guard, and will immediately place himself there, the weapon above or below the Student's line of direction, without engaging it. The Student, after an interval of two or three seconds, will develop the attack. The Teacher, who will have held his weapon under the line of direction, will parry in *tierce* and make a straight riposte. The Student will oppose this riposte by retreating, and both will arrange themselves, as above, to restart the action. The Student will repeat the attack. The Teacher will parry and riposte. The Student will oppose and retreat. The Teacher will return to guard, after having parried in *tierce* and *quarte*, the weapon above the line of direction, to parry the low line in *prime* and *seconde* and riposting each time. The Student will similarly parry the riposte by retreating.

Attacks and parries to the "lost sword", that is to say, without indication of the feeling of the steel

After having instilled these parries through repetition in the Student with the abandoning of the blade, and having made him practice them, we will make him parry the riposte as follows.

Both being on guard and always without engaging the weapons, the Student will develop the attack. The Teacher will parry in *tierce* and disengage his weapon, lowering the point to riposte in the *seconde* line. The Student, from opposition in *tierce*, will follow the weapon to parry this riposte in *prime*, and both will return to guard, the Teacher still holding the weapon under the line of direction. The Student will repeat the attack. The Teacher will make the same parry and the same riposte. The Student, instead of following the weapon, will reverse the direction<sup>23</sup> from the *tierce* opposition to parry the riposte in *seconde*, and immediately from on guard operate the other lines of opposition: attack, parry in *quarte* and riposte under the wrist in the *prime* line, oppose in *quarte* and follow the weapon to parry the riposte in *seconde*, then reverse from the *quarte* opposition to parry this riposte in *prime*. On guard, the Teacher will hold the weapon above the line of direction. The Student will attack. The Teacher will parry in *seconde* and disengage [with] the *tierce* riposte. The Student, from *seconde* opposition, will follow the weapon to parry the riposte in *quarte*, and will reverse the direction to parry it in *tierce*. Attack, parry in *prime*, riposte also on the wrist in the *quarte* line. From the *prime* opposition, [the Student will] follow to parry the riposte in *tierce* and then reverse to parry it in *quarte*. We will have the Student practice these parries and ripostes.

Riposte disengaged below and above the line of direction, which will first follow the weapon, then in the reverse direction

The engagement of weapons is useful, firstly to exercise the hand in the feeling of steel,<sup>24</sup> then in order to accustom the eye to measure the distance that must be kept in order not to let oneself be seized by the body, and to

The means used to learn to understand measure

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<sup>23</sup>*rétrogradera*

<sup>24</sup>*au tact du fer*

be able to strike without exposing oneself. The Teacher, by engaging the weapon for the action, places himself in measure. But the inexperienced student needs to be made to understand that it is because of the length of the weapon and the size of his adversary that he must approach closer or further in order to put himself on guard, and that in the presence of an adversary larger than himself, it will first be necessary to take the defensive, and the offensive in the opposite case. The ground on which we are for the action and the twitches<sup>25</sup> which characterise the passion of the enemy are also to be considered. The well-organised man quickly grasps these conclusions but, to apply urgent means in the circumstance, the body must be prepared. We exercise the parries, following the weapon with a detached riposte, to train the wrist to follow the weapon through feeling, and the reverse direction parries to force the Student not to give up<sup>26</sup> on the first opposition, in order to be able to ward off the riposte by reacting to the movement.

All these simple attacks and parries being done with ease, it will now be necessary to practice the circular parries. Circular parries

The Teacher will place the Student in second position, will engage the weapon, and will instruct *prime*. The Student will put on pressure. The Teacher will strike in the *seconde* line. The Student will follow the weapon, forming a circle in order to parry and bring it back into *prime* opposition, which we will call the CIRCULAR PARRY OF PRIME. Engagement in *seconde*, instruct *seconde* . . . pressure to the Student, an attack in *prime* by the Teacher, and the Student will again follow by describing a circle to parry and bring the weapon back into *seconde* opposition, which will be the *seconde* circle. Engagement and instruction *tierce* . . . pressure, attack in *quarte*, follow the weapon from below and parry the *tierce* circle. Engagement and instruction *quarte* . . . pressure, disengage in *tierce* and parry with the *quarte* circle.

When the Students parry by completing these circles well, it will be necessary to make them return the riposte at the sensation of each parry, even doubling these circles, and with a transposition of the wrist. This, we will explain.

The Student being placed on guard, the Teacher will engage the weapon in *prime* . . . pressure from the Student. The Teacher will double the disengagement to attack in the *seconde* line, and the Student will parry by first forming a *prime* circle. He will continue with a second circle but resolving the wrist in *tierce* opposition and without leaving the weapon, from which he will secure himself on the contrary by maintaining the same, so that the weapons will find themselves again engaged in *tierce*. The Student, after a few seconds interval, will apply pressure again. The Teacher will again

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<sup>25</sup>*mouvemens convulsifs*

<sup>26</sup>*ne point s'abandonner*

double the disengagement to attack in *quarte*. The Student will parry by forming two circles, and will complete the second circle in *prime* opposition. Just as the *prime* circle has the same orientation as the *tierce* circle, except for the wrist position, the *seconde* circle is also the same orientation as the *quarte* circle. Thus, the Teacher will exercise from the *seconde* circle to the *quarte* circle and from the latter to the former, just as from the *prime* circle to that of *tierce* and from *tierce* to *prime*.

We will also exercise these circles by a movement in the reverse direction. The weapons engaged in *quarte*, the Student will apply pressure. The Teacher will double the disengagement in the *tierce* line. The Student will describe a circle in the *quarte* opposition, and will reverse his parade in *tierce* or *prime*.<sup>27</sup> Engagement in *tierce* . . . pressure, double the disengagement to end the attack in *quarte*. The Student will decide to use the *tierce* circle, and will reverse direction in *quarte* or *seconde*. It will be necessary to apply the same in the engagements of *seconde* and *prime*, and finish by riposting.

Finally, to complete the mechanics of the weapon, we will practice CROSSES. The weapons engaged in *prime* . . . pressure, the Teacher will only disengage in *seconde*. The Student, after having parried the *prime* circle, will lead the weapon into the *tierce* opposition, binding the steel with haste, using an elastic movement of the wrist. The weapons engaged in *tierce* . . . pressure, disengagement in *quarte*, circular parry in *tierce*, and firmly crossing in *prime*. The weapons engaged in *quarte* . . . pressure, disengage in *tierce*, circular parry in *quarte*, and cross in *seconde*. From *seconde*, disengage in the *prime* line, circular parry in *seconde*, and cross in *quarte*.

Crossing after parrying with a circle

To perform the circular parries well, you must hold the weapon firmly in your hand. The wrist must be the centre of the circle because, if the movement were made with the arm, the centre would be at the shoulder, and the strikes would be brought back onto the body. These parries have to be made as quickly as possible but with very large circles of the point first. Otherwise, the movement would not encircle it and the attacking weapon would not be enveloped.

We are going against the ordinary method of only exercising with one hand, because the infantryman, fighting with his musket and bayonet, in the end, must put himself into action guiding the weapon with the left hand forward.<sup>28</sup> That the cavalryman must seek to fight his enemy on the left, being the unarmed side, but, if he himself found himself in such a case, he should not be found wanting, being able to act equally with both hands. It is appropriate for him to practice circular parries, manoeuvring his horse, and

Means by which the left hand will also be exercised

<sup>27</sup>ie: Instead of following the opponent's blade in a circular parry, the Teacher will make a circular parry in the opposite direction.

<sup>28</sup>*doit se mettre en action a gauche en avant pour conduire l'arme*



leaning across the saddle to the right and left. This is how he can manage to act on his horse without agitating it involuntarily, and to strengthen himself in the means appropriate to use against several assailants. It is when the cavalryman is surrounded that the crossing parries will be useful to him, especially since he can make a riposte from touch to touch only after a considered and well finished parry. In place of meeting the sword in a circular movement without termination, the crossing is absolutely necessary so as not to be stopped in the middle of attacking and defending.

## Summary

All movement of the arms, which is only executed by being repeated, is done mechanically. It is important in instruction to prepare the Students to have them find the reality for themselves. It is not the multiplicity of exercises that will lead them there. Thus, it is necessary to make the Students practice among themselves as soon as they can exercise with a little facility.

The Fencer who, with some physical ability, has strengthened himself by practising the principles, only uses simple means to attack in the action of an assault, especially since being within reach to hit his adversary without developing the lunge, he can strike him with the speed of an arrow. Also, the man who has these means does not play around in pulling off complicated feints. In a fight, he simplifies his movements as much as possible, and this is what suits the soldier, fighting in the melee where danger does not give time, so to speak, to breathe.

However, the soldier in a general action may find himself in an instant pushed back in the presence of a dangerous enemy and forced to fight him singularly. Then, he cannot have too many resources available. Not only must he know the advantage he can gain by breaking measure in the face of an enemy who presses him very hard, but also know the prudence that must be used to restrain himself against those who retreat.

The intelligent student, who will exercise these movements two or three times and the feints appropriate to the situation, will be able in attacking to acquire within a short time the possibility of applying them. Because feints have no value when one has impressed [on the enemy] the fear of simple strikes. For example, the straight strike in *quarte* on the non-pressure, and thrown with speed, prepares for the sliding disengagement of *tierce*.<sup>29</sup> The disengagement in *tierce* with pressure allows you to feint throwing the same strike in order to hit in the *quarte* line, and so in other lines of opposition. But what we have not demonstrated are attacks in the same stance because they are hardly practicable except with the sword and in single combat. In this

Attacks in the same stance

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<sup>29</sup>*prépare au coulé dégagé tierce*

circumstance, when the adversary has established the sword firmly in front of him, it is necessary to cross the weapon to attack, as we have explained, and strike in a determined line, or to strongly beat<sup>30</sup> the sword and strike straight. These strikes also allow one to feint because, being engaged in *quarte*, one can simulate the first movement without finishing in *seconde* and strike in *quarte*, and, after the second movement, beat and disengage into *tierce*.

These feint attacks, executed on the firm foot and in measure, expose oneself without running any very imminent danger. However, a subtle fencer could succeed in defeating them without using the parry and riposte if he judged the intention of his adversary. But it would be risky and even dangerous. Let us admit the possibility in order to get ideas about what we could do with more complicated attacks. For the feint with the disengaged slide<sup>31</sup>, one can deliberately neglect the holding of the weapon and, at the sensation of the disengagement, strike at the same time, opposing well. Being engaged in *quarte*, we will press the steel to decide the feint in *tierce* and strike in *quarte*. In this case, on the sensation of abandoning the weapon, we will disengage and maintain the strike in the *tierce* opposition. As for the feint at the cross, one can present the weapon to provoke this movement. But, this is where it is absolutely necessary that the blade action be only in the hand to avoid the result by immediately disengaging on the pulsation of the steel. This difficulty is applicable to the attack of the disengaged beat.

The fencer who, in an assault, sometimes succeeds in seizing these timed strikes on the firm foot is to be feared when he breaks the measure on purpose to throw a stop strike.<sup>32</sup> Because if, carried away by his simulated flight, we want to pursue him, even while protecting ourselves with the steel in the same orientation, he will not fail to make a slight beat and disengage on the raised foot to develop the stop strike. If, in the clash, he noticed that you were trying to disturb his weapon with forceful beats while disengaging, he will not fail to stop you by counter disengaging and he will thus avoid his enemy's steel. One will easily understand that a fencer, thus perfected, cannot fail to know what to do in all movements, and will not attack his adversary so unthinkingly. Thus, a skilled fencer, before closing on his opponent, will probe him either by different movements of the weapon or by *appels*, tapping his foot, and, when he has understood the [opponent's] intention, he will step pretending to make a mistake. Let us show only two stepping movements. First, he will abandon the weapon while narrowing the measure and, the hand and the foot acting as a single spring, make a straight stop strike. But

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<sup>30</sup>*froisser*

<sup>31</sup>*coulé dégagé*

<sup>32</sup>*tirer le temps d'arrêt*

the simple parry will issue at the same time, having been determined before the movement. Second, always seeing the weapon established in front of him, he will simulate striking the weapon either from *terce* or *quarte* then, being out of reach, he will engage the steel in *quarte*, narrow the measure by engaging in *terce* to counter disengage on the raised foot, and he will parry in *quarte*. This must suffice for those who like to overcome the difficulty. With intelligence, they will be able to apply it to the attacks and parries they prefer, and nothing will be easier for them than to double the disengagement to deceive the circular parries, be it the COUNTER OF QUARTE, the COUNTER OF TIERCE, the circle of *seconde*, or the circle of *prime*. (We omit the parries of the HALF CIRCLE OF OCTAVE and QUINT as equivalent to the lines of opposition in *prime* and *seconde*.) Experience will prove to them that a slight beat and disengaging, will defeat these circular parries even better.

As for the fencer who breaks at each movement without intending to strike a timed cut, and who by this means is always out of range, it is only by half-attacks while stepping that he can be reached. And with others, who stand firm and who step to riposte, we must develop [the attack] on them and simulate the retreat in order to strike a *remise*. Finally, the one who thrusts, after having attacked in line trying to parry the riposte at the risk of being hit blow for blow, is dangerous in this movement to riposte from feeling. It is by crossing that one must strike the riposte, or by the *flanconade*, which is almost the same thing, if one throws it with the wrist low so as not to oppose the left hand.

## Assaults at Arms

To get an idea of the two combatants' situation, let us imagine two brave and well-trained men, sword in hand to resolve a matter of honour. They will first place themselves on guard out of reach, the weapon stretched out in front of them, and regarding at each other steadfastly. I assume one is boiling with ardour and the other very attentive. The first, seeing his adversary remaining fixed, will make different movements to probe him but, unable to shake him, he decides to take the offensive. Immediately, he secures with his sword that of his adversary, to protect himself from the stop strike, and to narrow the measure. Having arrived within range without having been stopped and being engaged in *quarte*, he immediately gathers himself to follow his first impulse. He compresses himself on his legs, tightens the weapon in the hand, softening the joints of the arm and, for the attack, he develops it in all its parts, as the pressed trigger releases the spring of a firearm. The second, having neglected the stop strike, taking action without any preparatory movement, parried the attack, although unexpected, and struck the riposte. Let's take stock of the action.

First assault

Immediately after the weapons were engaged in *quarte*, the vanquished who had decided to upset the sword, finding it obstinately established in front of him, attacked by crossing in *seconde*, and completed the attack in the same line. The victor, who had his mind set to defend himself, and to attack if his enemy wanted to press him too hard, paid attention to feeling, and fixed his gaze to observe the movements. Thus, he held his weapon without stiffness and by this means he made the crossing unsuccessful which, having only weakly bound the steel instead of controlling it, left the wrist again in a false position, which energised the parry of *quarte*, and facilitated the riposte.

At the shock of individual combat, one must first withstand the attack, riposte, and counter riposte, and, if these three blows have been parried, break the measure to be out of reach, and start the action again. For it is necessary to convince yourself that there is only one of the three which can be executed with judgement. If it is the attack and it has been parried, the riposte, the counter riposte and their parries take place out of habit. Thus, it would be leaving things to chance not to withdraw after their execution. The first of the two combatants above, instead of abandoning himself determinedly, should have attacked with a slide<sup>33</sup> and thrown straight. He would have at least shaken his adversary and, by maintaining his development, he would have been able to oppose the riposte and counter riposte. And, if none had been struck, he would have been prepared to act according to the signals he received from the defence of his enemy.

Generally, being in measure and the weapons engaged, one should only decide to attack first by beating the sword and striking straight, because these break the intention of throwing a timed strike and force the parry. However, a man confident in his speed, and believing his adversary to have a tense mind, will find the means, even if only by an *appel* with the foot, to make him careless in holding of the weapon, or to press on it. Then, at the first touch, he will be able to develop the straight strike, or on the second disengagement. If he does not succeed, he will have at least forced his adversary to typify his parries and, even if they are circular, to deceive them. He will nevertheless only use the feints of a light disengaged beat, a pressure and a release and, at most, double the disengagement. These attacks, although in two stages, must be thrown as quickly as a single blow, especially since the movements of the tip of the weapon come from the fingers, and the throwing of the sword does not delay the development of the body.

If it is prudent to begin with simple attacks, it is necessary, on the contrary, to establish your defence with circular parries because a simple parry involves only opposing one line, and a circle envelops several. Let us consider a fencer, well versed in the parry and riposte of *quarte*, who, without any

Second assault

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<sup>33</sup>*froissement*

other precaution, wanted to make use of it first. There is no doubt that he will engage the weapon in *tierce*. If he judges from the attitude of his adversary that he is dealing with someone who strikes quickly, he will press the sword to make him disengage and, following his judgement, he will pay all his attention to feeling, in order to, as soon as the opponent abandons the sword, parry in *quarte*. If he meets steel in the *quarte* line, undoubtedly the riposte will start from the touch of the parry. But this is to suppose that we will immediately fall into the trap. As we must also admit, a man who has acquired speed is cunning. If the opponent foresees the intention, he will actually abandon the sword on the pressure to mislead his adversary and, instead of disengaging into *quarte*, he will strike straight in the *tierce* line, without wasting time feinting in *quarte*. Or, he will lower the point to extend the strike lower than the centre of the body. Let us not seek whether it is by judgement or by chance that we can defeat the simple parry at the beginning of an action, since the danger exists. Thus, according to our notion, it is more prudent to circle in *prime*, since the pressure is removed there first. Then, this parry covers all strikes, except the double disengagement in *seconde*. However, as this parry requires holding the wrist with the nails reversed, the weapon could be destabilised in the stance by the impacts of the steel, if the weapon was encountered before having completed the circle. It is therefore even more certain, from the *tierce* engagement, to decide on the counter opposition of *quarte*, because in this position the weapon is better secured in the hand. In the above discussion we spoke of the man perfected through long development, that is to say, one who, attacking with confidence, is nevertheless skilful in opposing the riposte in order to retreat, and who can sustain a shock of several weapon strikes in a row with composure.

It is this style of play that we must practice preferentially to that which will put us in opposition.

Let us examine in an assault two fencers who, with natural abilities and immense practice, have acquired lively hands. They attack with great lightness but they do not seek to form a determined parry and riposte because they are accustomed to feinting through continual fluttering of the foil, which sometimes gives them a weak opposition. So, they remain body to body, squabbling over spraying each other with point strikes or, sometimes, one or the other will attack with abandon and will immediately turn around, if his attack is parried, to return himself back on guard.

Third assault

It is not likely that, with sword in hand, one exposes oneself to being grabbed and, by turning around in this way, one can be struck in the kidneys, because the adversary, who has borne the cost of parrying the attack, having the right of reciprocity, cannot be prevented from riposting. Moreover, when we fight an enemy, we must be wary of everything.

Wanting to talk about the left-handed, we must say a word about the alleged difficulty that it causes those who only practice with the right. Of the left-hander

As the majority of men practice with their right hand rather than their left, it follows from this that Teachers improperly demonstrate the principles of Fencing only with their right hand. Thus, the *tierce* and *seconde* oppositions leave the torso entirely exposed on the left. The attacks in this line are less careful than those in the straight line because, in this latter line, the right arm crossing in the oppositions of *prime* and *quarte*, they should touch the body, striking under or above the arm. It therefore follows that from left-hander to left-hander, the fencers are equally contrary in their habits, since they find the left line blocked, like the one who, striking from the right, meets it when practising with them. So, to avoid finding yourself in this situation, you must get into the habit of letting the point of the weapon escape equally on both sides and maintain the attack's line of direction on the left as well as on the right. However, this difficulty is only an idea. To prove it, we will expose the reality in combat and, to make it understood, we will assume that one of the athletes is left-handed, having the mobility of the fencers in the third assault, and that he is dealing with a man who, striking from the right, is resolved with energy in the action.

Putting themselves on guard, the weapons established before them according to practice, the left-hander seeks to engage the sword in *quarte*. His opponent avoids this engagement, since the position of his wrist exposes him to being disarmed by the slide<sup>34</sup> (which every left-hander seeks quite rightly to do). The latter also seeks to take this advantage, but futilely for, in encountering the sword, he can be no more sure of it than if he engaged a feather. Unable to decide on an attack against such mobility, he gives up seeking the sword and, lowering his own, he decides to let his adversary come and attack him. The left-hander steps, threatening with the weapon, to force his enemy to engage the sword. As soon as the engagement in *tierce* is made, he pretends to cut over the point and develops the attack without recovering himself. The other, engaging the sword in *tierce*, parries immediately, maintaining well the circular opposition of *quarte*, and, although only weakly meeting the sword, nevertheless develops the riposte in the same line, which makes them both find themselves guard against guard and the weapons crossed above their heads, opposing each on the left. The former immediately feints in *seconde* (and the feint of the *coupé* would also have worked) but the latter, by the circular parry of *prime*, envelops while lifting the guard, takes a big step back and takes a determined part. Finally, being pursued with the same lightness, he strikes with confidence in the movement, the point meeting the

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<sup>34</sup>*froissé*

sword arm, also striking to the body.

This blow, although aimed at the body, would be nothing in an assault where the line of direction is constrained, since the arm would have prevented the button of the foil from striking the indicated place. We must not conclude from this that the habit of aiming at the centre of the *plastron* is incorrect because we cannot to accustom the hand to adjusting, since the slightest deviation of the wrist, due to the length of the weapon, increases at the extremity and causes the point to turn away from the body.

Each in his own way, let's now bring forward a man who insists on only parrying with the weapon with a fencer who only parries with the unarmed hand, and both striking to the right.

Parry of the unarmed hand. Fifth assault

Being on guard, the weapons engaged at the weak, the consistent fencer, seeing his opponent continually binding the steel with the counter of *quarte*, makes an *appel* with his foot before narrowing the measure. At this movement, the latter brings the left hand against the chest and changes the engagement by feinting to want to parry in *tierce*. Immediately, he re-engages in *quarte* and continues to bind the steel. The first, at this indication, conceives the idea of counter riposting. For this purpose, he advances within range, lightly glides his weapon in a circular movement and changes opposition. Sensing this change, he counter disengages, pretending to attack, counting on parrying and riposting, and he parries this riposte and counter riposte. But the second, who expected to parry with his hand, only held out his weapon and, seeing his intention frustrated, drew back and began his play again. The other, immediately gathering himself, closes to be in measure, applies pressure to force the change of opposition, and develops the attack by counter disengaging. His opponent defeats his attack by parrying with the hand and, having stretched out the weapon to reach him, could not succeed, seeing that the other had covered himself by raising his wrist in the opposition of *quarte*. The latter, having returned on guard and seeing his opponent persist in binding and still seeing the parry of his hand, reinstated the pressure and detached his weapon to simulate a straight strike, which again changed the engagement from *quarte* to *third*, as he had anticipated. Immediately, he made a light beat to the steel in this line and cut over the point in *quarte*. This attack struck, because the hand was only prepared to parry blows disengaging under the wrist.

In this assumption, I deviate from the shortest path because, instead of this light beat and cutting over the point, it is simpler to beat the steel and strike straight. All the more since this movement throws the weapon on the left hand and leaves the straight line unopposed.

Defending yourself by parrying with steel is more certain in that it reaches and crosses the attacking weapon in various directions along its length and

away from the body. If the unarmed hand, brought close to the body, can only cross the weapon near the point and with the same movement, it follows that it is very exposed to being pierced, even if sometimes protecting the body. These observations will however not be heard by those who rely more on the parry made with the hand than by those practice with the weapon. They will object to you that, in a serious matter, any means is good. They know of no other expedient than to give up on protecting themselves and to strike.

Following to this reasoning, we must believe ourselves on the ground in the presence of a furious man. We can represent him in combat by a set of rules. His response will be to run at you with a withdrawn arm to stab you.

Sixth assault

This is the attitude of the gladiator who, to threaten with the weapon, withdraws his arm backwards and brings his left hand forward. It will not intimidate the man who knows how to fight a reckless person. The latter will feel, at first sight, that there is no engagement of weapons in this position, so he will first put himself on guard, threatening the opponent with the point to the eyes. He will immediately step back, lowering his weapon and wrist and support himself on his right leg. Seeing his enemy stepping within range, darting his weapon at him and seeking to parry with his hand, he will throw his weapon in a straight line to stop him, and this without opposition nor elevation of the wrist, leaning the body forward and moving the left foot back. He will quickly return to guard with the right foot, whipping the parry between *prime* and *seconde* to protect his retreat, and will break again to wide measure. Then, being static, and also seeing himself pursued, he will develop the attack forward, instead of dropping the left foot behind. Immediately, he will pretend to recover himself and will strongly redouble the attack, by narrowing the left foot to *volter* to the right.<sup>35</sup> Finally, he will hastily withdraw to put himself again on guard and start again, using other precautions, if his enemy is not put out of action.

Let us assume that this man, passionate with anger, was not yet defeated, because we can suppose that in fencing he is well practised in the exercise, in which he paid attention to the parry of the hand preferentially to that of the weapon, and this habit has saved him rather than prudence. Thus, without dwelling on this point, let us follow the presentation of the fight, considering the ardour of the one and the coolness of the other, to show which side should have the advantage.

The irascibility of the first, leading him to run at his enemy with redoubled blows continually waving his left hand to protect himself from the attacking weapon, does not allow him to reflect on the danger he is running, and makes

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<sup>35</sup>The fifth edition of the *Dictionnaire d'Académie Française* (1798) has only a single definition for this, *Terme d'escrime. Changer de place pour éviter les coups de son adversaire.* Fencing term: To change location to avoid the blows of one's opponent.



it impossible for him to observe any measure, nor of gathering himself to develop an attack.

The second, on the contrary, based on the convulsive movements that he sees in his adversary, will judge that he cannot fight him with parries and ripostes without exposing himself to being struck at the same time, because one cannot can parry either *tierce* or *quarte* strikes thrown at close range, the wrist low while raising the weapon, so to speak, perpendicularly. And when wanting to parry them in *prime* or *seconde*, one can meet the steel, but not decisively enough to respond through feeling, seeing that these two parries are more or less in a line parallel to the direction of these blows. The course to take for now is to keep your distance and each time the enemy approaches your range, you must try to stop him with strikes thrown in volleys. Also, former, putting himself on guard, first threatened his enemy with the weapon, threw the first strike, dropping his left foot back, immediately raised up with his right foot, and broke a large measure in order to tire the rage of the latter. From there, he again showed him the point in his eyes, to remind him of the rights that nature has over all men. Then, he repeated the stop strike, bringing his right foot forward without developing it too much and, at the same time, simulated a retreat to draw him to him safely. And, as soon as he perceives him moving, he launched himself at him, pushing the body off the line. If we had to continue to fight after this clash, we could deceive the parries of the enemy's left hand, not having much to fear from his blows, as long as we do not allow ourselves to force the measure, that is to say, not allowing ourselves to get too close.

These details will be enough to make it clear that in single combat we assume two combatants on a ground chosen for and suitable for moving away or closing on their adversary at will, and who fight with similar weapons, instead of, in a general action, the soldier, at first maintained in his rank, having neither the choice of terrain nor the same freedom of movement,<sup>36</sup> who then that he has to fight indiscriminately against all kinds of weapons, and is again sometimes obliged to defend himself having only debris. Finally, he must, throughout the combat, share the danger with the enemy, until strength is extinguished, while managing maneuver and commanding the movement<sup>37</sup> of the infantry formations.

## Military Maneuvers

A platoon of four cavalymen will be arranged two deep and two abreast, the sabre in the right hand. We will command the two Students in the first row to walk forward five large steps, stop and about face. These two Students,

Cavalry. Starting with a platoon of four

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<sup>36</sup>*latitude*

<sup>37</sup>*évolutions*, a common term in period military texts for the movements of body of soldiers.

aligned with their leaders of the file, will be ordered to put themselves on offensive guard. This movement executed, the Students will be informed that the attack rank alone will be commanded, thus. The other will be required to follow the same movement but in defensive guard, without engaging the weapon and below the line of direction. The first rank, after a small interval, will develop the attack. The other will parry in *tierce* and will detach<sup>38</sup> the riposte with a cut in *quarte*. The two Students in the front row will parry the riposte and, maintaining opposition, will recover themselves on guard. We will make the Students rest at this tempo, to make the following observations. First, to the Students in the first row, who as soon as they returned on guard, they were good on their feet and withdrew the body as much as possible. Then, to those of the second rank, in the feeling of opposition to their riposte, they recovered themselves with the left foot and stepped, well withdrawing the body, to pass through the first row, maintaining their weapons through their passing through [the first row], and continuing to walk about five steps. This executed, we will order a halt. We will make them change their weapons and immediately turn around. At this command, the Students in the first row will recover themselves on their right foot to the first position, and at the command to the right, will turn around to be abreast. We will order the second rank to put themselves on guard offensively. Consequently, the first rank will place itself on guard defensively, always with the weapon under the line of direction. After a short interval, the second rank will develop the attack. The first rank will parry to move away to the left, and will detach the cut over<sup>39</sup> to riposte to the right, and will recover on the right foot, to pass through, following, like the others, the same directions as above. If the Teacher considers it necessary to pass through the same row several times in succession, he will continue to order the [rank] who remains in place.

This maneuver suits the cavalryman because, in the melee, he may find himself dismounted and forced to fight on foot. Agility can help him rally himself to his brothers in arms. When exercising this platoon, it will be necessary to recommend to the Students that, when they change the weapon in the hand, they are as prompt as possible.

When several Students are thus trained, twenty of them will be brought together to exercise them as follows.

From these twenty Students we will form two numbered platoons of ten each. They will be ranged five abreast and two in depth, and we will leave a distance of five to six paces between the ranks of each platoon (because we assume them here on horseback). These platoons will be in line of battle, one in front of the other about fifteen steps away, holding the sabre in his

In platoons of ten, pistols in the left hand

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<sup>38</sup> *détachera*

<sup>39</sup> *coupé* indicates the action also called here cutting over the point

right hand and the pistol in his left. We will choose two students intelligent enough to have the commands executed for each platoon. The Teacher will command: first platoon, at the double . . .<sup>40</sup> march. The student officers will repeat [the order] and have [it] executed. Since the first platoon has been named, it will be up to them to attack, and this is what the Student officers will pay attention to, so that it is put in motion first. The two platoons are set in motion and arrive one in front of the other about five steps away. The first rank of the first platoon will put itself in the offensive guard, the Students of the other first row in defensive guard, the sabre under the line of direction and each holding the pistol at the side of the body. The movement executed, the first will attack. The second will parry in *quarte* and riposte straight. At the touch of the parry, the first rank of the first platoon will oppose the sabre to the riposte and, immediately, carrying the pistol to support this opposition in detaching the sabre, he will pass through to attack the second rank, repeating the same operation. The second rank of the first platoon will attack like its first rank and all the Students will then be in action. Once the action is over, the first rank of the first platoon will continue to march forward. Its second rank will follow and align itself with its file leader, maintaining the required distance . This platoon, thus aligned, will be ordered to about face and halt. The Students of the second platoon will be ordered to recover themselves into the first position and to quick march<sup>41</sup> then make a half turn to the left, if the first platoon made it to the right, and halt.

Then, the Teacher will order for the second platoon to attack. And if, during the meeting, he judges it necessary to pass through the same platoon several times in succession, he will reiterate his command.

The skilful cavalryman will always manage a shot, to shoot at him at point blank range, if necessary. In the melee, he may encounter a dangerous adversary or find himself surrounded. With his shot, he will make a gap. Moreover, he will still be able to use his pistol for defensive purposes. This will not be difficult for the one who keeps his head cool during the action because, the man who is not accustomed to parrying with the same weapon which he uses to attack, seeks to protect himself from the attacking weapon with the unarmed hand, as we have already observed (also, the ancients used the shield). To parry with the same weapon which is used to attack, this is the result of art. Therefore, we cannot exercise the cavalryman too much in parries. Thus, we will exercise each platoon, as follows.

The Teacher will order the first rank of a platoon to about face to be in front of the second rank. We will count the Students out loud, and we will put

Circular parries practised in platoons

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<sup>40</sup>*pas accéléré*

<sup>41</sup>*marcher aux pas accélérés*

the odd numbers on offensive guard, the even numbers in each rank will leave for a break. Those of the second rank who will have remained in place will also put themselves on guard and engage the weapons in *prime*. After a short interval, they will put pressure on in order to make [them] disengage in the *seconde* line. They will parry this attack through a circular parry of *prime*. They will riposte straight and maintain their weapons in this same line of opposition. The first rank, after having developed the attack, will oppose the riposte and, securing themselves with the weapon in the same position, will make their retreat and will prepare themselves for their turn on the defensive. The second rank will also develop the attack through the sense of pressure. And the Students of the first rank will also parry with the circular parry of *prime* and riposte. Thus, we will exercise the circular parries alternately in the three other lines of opposition. When the Teacher wants to order a rest, he will make a halt at the moment of the retreat and will order the first position.

The even numbered Students will return to their ranks and they will be ordered to exercise in the same way.

When the Students are a little accustomed to practising these parries together, we will form stronger platoons to exercise them following the same method.

The Students will scrupulously observe their distance in this movement because, if they only recovered themselves to the middle position, explained below, those who had to parry the attack would not be able to form the circle, seeing that the attack would come too quickly. We practice these circular parries in even and odd numbers because the blades would intersect each other if we did not separate the Students into one or the other number.

To train the infantryman with his musket and bayonet at the end, you will first have to make him practice the following position and, again, with his sabre in his hand.

Infantry exercise

The Student, placed in first position, will have his foot placed on the side of the action, approximately two and a half foot lengths from the other foot (which is the middle between the second and third position), the thighs tensed, the body well supported on both legs, and the unarmed hand brought close to the chest. At the word ACTION, the Student will place himself in this middle position. In this attitude, the Student will have to exercise the different movements of the weapons, demonstrated in the mechanics, on the firm foot. When attacking, the upper body will lean forward, bending the thigh towards the side of the action and, for the retreat, we will extend it again, withdrawing the upper body back. It will also be necessary to withdraw the body back, bending the thigh on this side, when operating on the defensive, and practising more on the left side than on the right side.

Middle position

The infantrymen being arrayed in line and maneuvering with fire, each musketeer of the first file occupies an area of approximately thirty-four inches in front line. Instead of having him cross with the bayonet, the withdrawal of the body presents only one { p.74} line of thirteen to fourteen inches and, therefore, he finds sufficient space between each man to pass through there.

It is therefore absolutely necessary to have the musketeer exercise this middle position so that, in action, he can maintain his poise, despite the weight of his weapon. It will be advisable to have Students of a weak constitution practice it for a long time with a sabre in hand to strengthen them.

When the Student exercises this position, he will then be made to practice it with the musket armed with his bayonet and, to put himself in action with this weapon, he will position himself with his left foot forward, crossing the bayonet, and holding the breech of the musket pulled back so that the left forearm is against the body, and the bayonet aimed at the chest. It is thus that the Student will be in position to attack and, to be on the defensive, he will direct the bayonet towards the left hand of his opponent and below the line of direction, having the left arm a little separated from the body.

Musket exercise for  
the use of the bayonet

To carry out what we have just said, the Teacher and the Student will place themselves in front of each other, separated from each other by approximately four steps and with their weapons at their feet. The Teacher will order readying the weapon and then ACTION. Both will perform these two steps but with the Student in an attacking position and the Teacher in a defensive position. After a few seconds interval, the Student will extend the attack and the Teacher will parry to drive the weapon away in front of him. The Teacher will make the Student freeze in place and will comment to him to withdraw the left foot against the right in first position in order to retreat, and immediately bring the right foot backward to put himself back into action and in the defensive guard. The Teacher, on the contrary, will recover the right foot against the left and will immediately put himself back into action in order to attack. After an interval, the teacher will attack, the Student will parry, and thus they will execute attack and defence alternately.

To quickly acquire confidence in these two steps, at the beginning of this maneuver, it will be advisable to execute either the defence or the attack several times in a row, and in the following manner to accelerate the action. Wanting to continue the attack on the Student, the teacher will, as soon as he has parried, recover himself on his left foot and put himself back into action and in a defensive guard. At this indication, the Student will do the opposite tempo to put himself back on the offensive, and both will continue like this until the Teacher lifts his right foot, which will indicate to the Student to

take in his turn in the defensive guard. And, finally, order HALT to have the weapon made ready and then a rest break.

This parry tempo and this attack tempo well practised, the infantry will stimulate practising other weapon movements, to make use of them as needed.

When several Students are a little used to maneuvering [with] their muskets as above, we will then form platoons of four. We will arrange two of them to be abreast, each on a line, approximately ten paces from each other, and the Students having the weapons at their feet. The first platoon will be ordered to ready their weapons, cross their bayonets, and march at the double. At this movement, the second platoon, after having readied weapons, will also cross bayonets and hold it against the tempo of attack. The Students of the first platoon will lengthen their pace as they approach in order to find themselves in the middle position when they are close enough for action. Having each arrived in front of their adversary and within bayonet range, they will parry with their muskets, to ward off the bayonet directed in front of them. They will maintain their weapons, withdrawing the body, and will pass through. They will continue their step for about ten paces and will stop while readying their weapon, and immediately about face. As soon as the passing through is done, the students of the second platoon will be ordered to ready their weapons and about face, which will put the Students in a position to recommence this clash.

Exercise by platoons  
of four infantry

As more students are trained at passing through, we will make more numerous platoons and we will arrange them three deep to have them exercise against each other. And when there are enough of them to form two companies, they will be maneuvered in the following manner.

The two companies will be ordered to put themselves in battle, one in front of the other, and far enough apart to be set in motion at the *pas de charge*.<sup>42</sup> They will do the firing exercise, and the drums of the first company will be made to roll so that they are the first to stop firing. The muskets will be carefully reloaded before readying the weapon. Then, we will order [them] to cross the bayonets and to charge. Having arrived about ten paces from the second, we will command this company with these words TO MAKE FIRE . . . HALT. The Students will stop without readying the weapon. Immediately order ARM . . . SECOND AND THIRD RANKS . . . AIM . . . FIRE. Once the discharge has been made, the first rank, which has retained its shot, will stand up and all will have their weapons crossed. Immediately [we will order], PAS DE CHARGE, FORWARD . . . MARCH. Each Student of the first rank, when approaching the enemy, will adjust and fire his shot at the one

Maneuver to attack  
on the charge

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<sup>42</sup>The usual command signalling the charge

who could stop him. If he does not like firing at point blank range, he will thrust immediately, moving away from the direction of the bayonet and will pass through the three opposing ranks, by means of which the other two ranks will also be in action.

Immediately after the discharge of the second and third rank of the first company, the second will be ordered to cease its fire. We will cross bayonets in the front row and, to first facilitate passing through, the other two will be ordered to open the rows so that there are eight to nine steps between each of them. Having stopped, make them also cross bayonets.

While the first rank of the first company will quicken their pace to attack, the Students of the other two ranks will pace themselves so as not to crowd too closely and be able to take action after the leaders of the file have passed through the first opposing rank. In this manner, the two companies are fighting together, representing melee combat.

The first rank of the first company, out of action, will be ordered to ready arms and march at ordinary pace. We also then have the second rank ready weapons when it will have passed through, but we will make it march at the double to rally itself to its first rank, each Student aligning himself with the leader of his file. And when the third has rallied, following the same instruction, we will order the company to stop and about face, to put it back into action.

As for the second company, the first rank will be ordered to ready weapons when the three ranks of the first have passed through it. It will be made to about face and immediately march to its second row. This second rank, also being out of action, will even receive the command to ready weapons, about face and march to its third rank, which, immediately after the clash of the first company, will be made to ready weapons and about face. It will remain in place to wait for the rally of its other two ranks. The two companies will thus be rallied and will find themselves in battle side by side to repeat the action.

To order the infantrymen to move at the charge with side arms is to tacitly tell them that they are going to fight hand to hand. Thus, the army marching in formation,<sup>43</sup> the first rank, necessarily, must push the enemy so that the second rank is not stopped, and it [ie: the second rank] must also advance to put the third rank into action. To engage the soldier to thus overthrow the enemy, he needs bravery, the surest basis of which is confidence in his skill and in the ability of his brothers in arms. Moreover, feeling the importance of rallying himself to fight with them, he will endeavour to reunite himself there, even if only for a second, in order to face the enemy who could strike

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<sup>43</sup>*marchant en bataille*

him or seize him by force from behind. The shooting that we preserve in the front rank for attacking the enemy with bayonets is again a powerful means of emboldening him to attack at first sight and not to be stopped in his movement by a superior force which could intimidate the weak when they are in a position to act.

As experience has proven that the enemy does not take long to use the same means that were used to defeat him, we will train the Students to stand firm in formation, to resist their adversaries, in the event that they would alert them by moving first, to charge with bayonets.

Formation to resist  
the bayonet charge

Thus, the two companies, in presence and arrayed in line of battle, will be ordered to start moving at the *pas de charge*, immediately one after the other. Arriving at a distance of approximately fifteen paces, we will have the first company HALT and immediately order the second and third ranks to fire. As soon as the discharge [is complete], we will order, FORMATION . . . MARCH. The Students in the first row will walk two steps to put themselves in action and the weapons in play. Those in the second row will walk one step, will stand firm and hold the weapon in the offensive in the line of pass through, and the third rank will stand firm in place in the same direction. The second company, after having also fired, will be ordered to attack at the double. The students of the first rank of each company, having yet to fire their shot, will seek to use it on the enemy to whom they believe they can best adjust. Finally, the second company, arriving within bayonet range, will pass through forming the three parry tempos to ward off the fixed bayonets of the three ranks of the first company, and will maintain well the weapon in the lines of opposition, without pressing too much on each other, to be able to return the riposte if needed.

To resist the clash and only order crossing the bayonets, leaving the soldiers arranged in their ranks, is to hold them in an awkward position and with little stability, instead of being supported to maintain the weapon in a stopping position. We understand that this is to present a line bristling with points. But this only intimidates the soldier without experience and without skill in handling his weapon, because the courageous grenadier, feeling that he can break through this line by launching into it with force, will be able to succeed in overthrowing the line in front of him.

Finally, in the melee, the cavalry men without horses, the artillery men without guns, will be able to come together to return the charge and, although isolated from their unit, to become formidable to the enemy.





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