Theory for learning cane in 25 lessons

Furnished with 76 images

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Some preliminary notes

The art of cane fencing is not as useless as some people would like to think.

As it underpins the art of personal defence, it is indispensible; as for health, it is one of the acceptable exercises for the civilised in order to attain a gymnastic education.

In the countryside, you have, for your diversion, long and perfumed walks, hunting, fishing, riding, and dancing; in town other customs are added to these pleasures; fencing and other entertainments which derive from it, such as boxing, baton, cane and other games of finesse.

The first defence for mankind has always been the fist; later man gathered stones and launched them at the heads of his enemies; then he broke off a tree branch or a piece of wood, named later a mace or head-breaker, which, down the centuries, decreased in size and came to us in the form we know today as the cane.

Piercing and slashing weapons and firearms followed this first line of defence and are considered unnecessary in our current state of society. However, regardless of our civilisation, some safety is still enjoyed by its citizens, who are wise to not disdain the primitive weapons; the presence of these is well felt, as they are not forbidden to be carried by anyone in order to repel a nocturnal aggressor, an insult or an animal attack.

Throughout these ideas I have organised the THEORY OF THE ART OF THE CANE; I wanted to reduce it to its barest simplicity; my efforts were crowned with success. Twenty-five of my lessons are sufficient to allow the pupil to obtain a degree of perfection which requires six months of practice.
I have put together, what’s more, lessons that will not distract anyone from other serious occupations; my unique intention is to create a gymnastic diversion and a means of useful repulsion of those certain circumstances that are out of your control.

This exercise must be cultivated, as it not only promotes the advantage of muscular force, but also develops vigour in the arm, chest and legs, expands the lungs and gives the torso greater stature and volume. How could it be thought otherwise when one thinks that a pupil can build up to throwing one hundred and fifty blows in a minute?

The wisest schools recognise the indispensible nature of my theory; and those young men called to military service, who take my lessons, can defend themselves with swords, with great aplomb and dexterity having had preliminary instruction in the cane so as to polish their sabre-wielding.

I shall finish by inviting the chiefs of institutions, who have not yet recognised my theory to kindly make known the advantages of my new theory to their pupils, uniquely established as a SYSTEM OF PERSONAL DEFENCE.
Guard
Method for coming on guard

Preliminary observations

One must, before going on guard, pass the wrist through the martingale, seizing the cane ten centimetres from the end of the cane; and, so that the grip does not slip back, wind up the martingale, so that the hand always stays in the same position; otherwise, while moving about, the cane will slip down in the hand and won’t have enough strength to parry and riposte.

Guard

After seizing the cane in the manner shown above, one must place the feet squarely, that’s to say the toe of the left foot turned to the left and the toe of the right foot facing the adversary, the right heel behind the left heel; then, immediately, spread the legs by about two foot lengths, body in the middle, so that it does not fatigue one leg or the other. Once they are apart, while facing the adversary, hold the cane at eye-height, the right arm a little bent, the hand turned, the nails underneath, in the position called tierce, and the left arm behind the kidneys.

This position is called “guard”, because one returns here between every parry.

Parades and ripostes on the spot

One must, for every guard, with the exception of those for the legs, withdraw the right foot back to the left (a position which gives greater ease for a riposte on the lunge), in such a way that if the adversary is pretending to strike high, and really is to strike low the leg does not get taken out.

The high strike is called a blow to the head or face.
**Head parry**

To parry the head, one must raise the arm to its full length, at the same time as one withdraws the right leg, the wrist carried slightly to the fore, on the right side, so that it is not struck if the adversary gives a strike that is a little to the side, and the cane is placed horizontally to protect the left shoulder.

One must take care that every parry is made with force, in such a way that he who is striking feels the shock in his cane. This movement is especially easy even when on guard, where the arm is bent, which will be enough to give a brisk shockwave, as the two canes coming together will provide the necessary shock.
Head blow
Parry
Riposte with a head blow,
after a head parry
**Riposte with a head blow after a head parry**

Having taken the parry, the arm raised at full length to the right, one must, to riposte, bend the arm while letting the tip of the cane fall near the left shoulder; then, making it describe a circle, by passing the butt around the head (in such a way that the blow gathers force), beating the blow upon the adversary, while lunging with the right leg in order to reach his head, and then returning to guard in the manner shown previously, a position which must always be taken after each blow is given.

One must, without exception, to facilitate ripostes:

1- Open the fingers in such a way as to direct the cane with the thumb and index finger; then, the cane arriving at the place one wishes to strike, grip forcefully. This method is indispensible for striking outside.

2- Bend the arm in such a way that it makes the cane describe a circle; because all strikes that are only developed with the wrist do not have force.
Riposte with a face blow, inside, after a head parry

The cane placed as in a head parry, wrist on the right, hand in tierce, one must, to riposte to the face, bend the arm, while making the cane describe a horizontal circle; then, while lunging, extend the arm to the right, while putting the nails in quarte, that is to say on top, in such a way that the cane is directed at the adversary’s left ear.
Riposte with a face blow to the inside, after a parry of tierce
Riposte with a leg blow to the inside
Riposte with a leg blow, inside, after a head parry

As the arm is extended, in order to make a head parry, one must, to riposte to the leg, bend it in such a way as to let the tip of the cane fall to the height of the left shoulder; then make it form an oblique wheel and, while extending the arm to the right, while lunging, hand turned in quarte, whirling as fast as possible while making the blow.

This blow, named the “leg blow to the inside” is such that it is enough to put one’s adversary out of the fight, the “leg blow to the outside” has less effect, and is not given unless to the calf of the leg.

Parry of the face blow to the inside, called the parry of quarte

One must extend the arm to the left, and a little to the fore, the wrist at breast height, the tip of the cane up in the air.
Face blow struck to the inside

Parry
Riposte with a kidney blow after a parry of a face blow to the inside, taken in quarte.
**Riposte with a kidney blow**  
*after a parry of a face blow to the inside, taken in quarte.*

The arm is extended on the left side and the tip of the cane is up in the air, straight up, to riposte, raise the arm, nails in quarte, and, the cane placed horizontally, make it describe a circle, while lunging and extending the arm to the left, nails in tierce, then striking the adversary’s kidneys.

One can equally, by this method, riposte higher with a face blow.

**Rising blow,**  
*after a parry of the face blow to the inside, taken in quarte.*

From a face parry, one must, to make a rising parry, bend the arm while lowering the tip of the cane to the rear, in such a way as to make it describe a circle close to the body; then strike, while returning the hand to tierce, such that the blow arrives on the adversary’s elbow.

This blow, nearly always, renders the adversary unable to riposte.
Riposte with a rising blow, after a parry of a face blow inside, taken in quarte.
Riposte with a leg blow
or after an outside
Riposte with a leg blow to the outside, after a parry of the face blow inside, taken in quarte

One must raise the arm to its full length to the left, place the cane horizontally; make it describe a circle while lunging, and, while extending the arm to the left, hand in tierce, strike the adversary’s leg on the outside.

This blow can only be made as a riposte.

Parry of the face blow inside, called tierce

One must, to parry a face blow inside, bring back the right leg next to the left, arm carried to the right, wrist at shoulder height and turned to the outside, the tip of the cane in the air and slightly angled.
Face blow struck inside  Parry called tierce
Parry of a face blow, seen from the side.

Same parry, seen from the front.
Riposte with a head blow after a parry of a face blow outside in tierce.
Riposte with a head blow,  
after a parry of a face blow outside, taken in tierce.

The arm is extended to the right to parry, the tip of the cane is up in the air, one must raise the arm its full length, on the same side as it is placed, lower the tip of the cane, near the left shoulder; then, while bending the arm, make it describe an oblique circle and, while lunging, direct the blow at the adversary’s head, hand turned in quarte.

Riposte with an inside blow,  
after a parry of a face blow, taken in tierce

One must raise the arm on the right to its full length, placing the cane horizontally; then, while bending the arm, make the cane describe a circle, and lunge, while extending the arm on the right, in such a way that it reaches the adversary’s left ear, the hand turned in quarte.
Riposte after a face blow inside,
after a parry of a face blow
taken in tierce
Riposte with a leg blow inside after a parry of a face blow outside taken in tierce
Riposte with a leg blow inside
after a parry of a face blow outside, taken in tierce

One must, for this riposte, raise the arm to its full length, on the right side; then, while bending it, make the cane describe a circle, extending the arm to the right, and, lunging, the body well seated, strike the base of the adversary’s leg.

Parry of the face inside, taken in prime

One can also parry the face in a position of prime, a position which facilitates ripostes to the inside.

One must, to parry in prime, raise the arm on the left side, above the head completely to the left, the tip of the cane at the bottom, and almost perpendicular, in such a way to see the adversary between the arm and the cane.
Face blow struck inside

Parry called prime
Riposte with a head blow, after a parry of the face inside, taken in prime.
**Riposte with a head blow,**  
**after a parry of the face inside, taken in prime**

When in a parry of prime, as the wrist is somewhat high and placed to the left above the head, it is sufficient, in order to riposte, to make the cane describe a circle; then, the wrist arriving behind the head, lunge while briskly extending the arm, then strike the adversary’s head.

**Riposte with a leg blow inside,**  
**after a parry of a face blow, taken in prime.**

The arm is placed on the left in a position of prime, one must, to riposte to the leg, carry the arm on the right, the cane placed horizontally; then, while bending the arm in such a way that the cane describes a circle, extend the arm, while lunging, and strike the adversary’s leg, hand turned to quarte.
Riposte with a leg blow inside, after a parry of a faceblow taken in prime.
Riposte with a face blow inside after a parry of the face in prime
Kidney Parry

One must, to make a kidney parry, raise the arm horizontally, wrist on the right side at shoulder height, and lower the tip of the cane, having the nails in tierce, the wrist completely turned to the outside.
Kidney blow

Parry

Coup de reins

Parade.
Riposte par un coup de tête,
auprès de la parée de rein.

Riposte with a head blow
after a kidney parry
Riposte with a head blow after a kidney parry

The arm in a kidney parry, it is enough to raise the arm by its full length, then bend it while guiding the cane at his left side, then make it describe a circle, to strike the head, wrist turned in quarte.

Riposte with a face blow inside, after a kidney parry

One must raise the arm by its full length, while placing the cane horizontally (as with a head parry) and, bending the arm, make the cane describe a horizontal circle, hand turned to quarte, extend the arm, while lunging, to strike the adversary’s face.

To riposte with a flank blow, after the same parry, the way to riposte is the same as that which was taught above; only one must lower oneself more while lunging.
Riposte after a face blow
inside after a kidney parry
Riposte with a leg blow inside, after a kidney parry
**Riposte with a leg blow inside, after a kidney parry**

One must raise the arm to its full length, on the right, placing the cane horizontally in the position of a head parry; then bend the arm while describing a circle with the cane, and extending the arm, while turning the hand in quarte, strike the leg; it is necessary, so as to not hit above the knee, to bend right down when lunging.

**Flank parry**

One must, to parry the flank, outstretch the arm toward the left side, wrist above the head, the tip of the cane inverted in the same position as for the parry of prime.
Flank blow

Parry
Riposte with a flank blow after a flank parry from prime
Riposte with a head blow
after a flank parry in prime
Riposte with a face blow inside,
after a flank parry taken in prime
Riposte with a head blow,  
*after a flank parry, taken in prime*

The arm placed along the left side must be raised in the same direction; then, while bending it in such a way as to make the cane describe a circle, extend the arm to strike, hand turned to quarte.

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Riposte with a face blow to the inside,  
*after a flank parry, taken in prime*

One must raise the arm to the right to place the cane horizontally, in such a way as to make it describe a circle, and extend the arm while striking, hand turned to quarte.
**Riposte with a flank blow,**
**after a flank parry, taken in prime**

One must, to riposte, raise the arm to the right side, the tip of the cane placed horizontally then, bending the arm, while making the cane describe a circle, extend to the right to strike, hand turned to quarte.

This way of turning the cane is the same as for a face blow inside; only one must, while lunging, drop lower.

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**Parry against a leg blow to the outside**

One must, to parry the leg outside, while on guard, lower the tip of the cane, about 15 centimetres from the ground, arm extended to the right, hand turned to tierce, in such a way so that there is no need to slip the leg, and thus the parry will sure to protect.
Parry

Leg blow to the outside
Riposte with a head blow after a parry of the leg to the outside
Riposte with a face blow
after a parry of the leg to the outside
**Riposte**

**with a head blow, after a leg parry, outside**

One must, to riposte, raise the arm to its full length, while keeping the tip of the cane low, bent, in a way that the cane describes a circle to the left side, and extend, while striking, in such a way that it reaches the adversary’s head, hand placed in quarte.

**Riposte with a face blow, after a leg parry to the outside**

One must raise the arm, to its full length, then bend it, in a way that the cane describes a horizontal circle, while extending the arm, hand turned in quarte, in such a way that it touches the adversary’s left ear.

One can, by this means of developing the cane, also strike the flank.
Coup de jambe en dehors.

Leg blow to the outside

Paradeur.

Parry
Riposte to the outside of the face after a leg parry in quarte.
Rising parry
**Leg parry inside**

One must, to parry, while on guard, extend the arm quickly, to the left side, the tip of the cane 15 centimetres from the ground, hand turned to quarte.

A leg blow to the inside can also be parried with a hand turned to tierce, but, in this parry, one cannot riposte quickly to the outside as the wrist must be placed in quarte; it is thus better to parry, immediately, by the first means.

Teach the above parry for the leg, then your pupils will know all the parries; but it is much faster, when one aims to land a leg blow, to bring back the lead leg to the left, without placing the foot on the ground, while raising the arm so as to be able to strike the head or the face.

**Riposte with a face blow outside, after a leg parry inside, parried in quarte**

One must raise the arm to its full length and in the same direction where it was placed, to parry, the cane held horizontally; bend the arm, so that it describes a circle, to the left side, and extend the arm to its full length, to strike the adversary’s right ear.
**Rising parry**

One is always exposed to a rising blow, whenever one strikes high, that’s to say, as explained before, when striking the head or face; thus, when extending the arm to strike, one must, to parry a rising blow, withdraw, immediately, the leading arm to the right side, the point a little in the air and slightly angled to the right; because if a rising blow is aimed slightly to the side it can reach the face.

**Riposte with a thrust to the face, after a rising parry**

Having withdrawn the arm to the rear, to parry the rising blow, the hand is found in quarte; one must, to riposte, with a thrust of the tip, extend the arm, while turning the hand to tierce.
Riposte with a thrust to the face, after a rising parry
Parry of a thrust inside, parried in quarte
**Parry of a thrust inside, parried in quarte**

One must, if the thrust is made to the inside, lower the wrist, while turning the nails to quarte, the tip of the cane up in the air, arm extended to the left side, so that the thrust passes by the body.

**Riposte with a face blow outside,**

*after parrying a thrust, inside*

On must, to riposte, carry the wrist to the left side, the hand completely turned to quarte, extending the arm to its full length, the cane placed horizontally, bend the arm in such a way that the cane describes a circle; then turn the hand to tierce, while striking the adversary’s right ear.

One can also, having parried in the manner above, riposte with a leg blow outside; but it is better to not do this, because this riposte will fall upon the calf with little effect.
Riposte with a face blow outside, after parrying a thrust to the inside.
Side parry against a thrust outside
**Parry of a thrust to the outside, that’s to say over the arm**

One must, to parry, quickly throw the arm to the right side, hand turned to tierce, tip of the cane up in the air, such that the blow passes to the right side.

**Riposte with a face blow,**
**inside, after a parry of a thrust to the outside**

One must carry the arm to the right, raising it to its full length, while placing the cane horizontally above the head, bending the arm, while describing a circle with the cane, and, while lunging for a strike, turning the hand to quarte.
Riposte with a face blow inside, after a parry of a thrust outside.
Riposte with a leg blow, after a parry of a thrust outside
Riposte with a leg blow, inside, after a parry of a thrust to the outside

One must carry the arm to the right side, to place the cane horizontally, bending the arm so that it describes a circle; then extend on the right, while lunging, hand turned to quarte.

The parries and ripostes taught previously can also be done while stepping and retreating.

Method for parry and riposte while stepping

One must place the left leg next to the right leg, and then lunge with the right leg while striking, which must be done when the adversary attacks from afar. In this case, so that the riposte can land, one must, while parrying, draw back, as was said, the left leg toward the right leg, and lunge while riposting.

To parry and riposte while retreating, one must withdraw the right leg toward the left leg; then, while striking, carry the left leg to the rear.

It is useful to retreat when engaged against an adversary who strikes vigorously without bothering to parry ripostes; however one must never retreat so that one becomes pinned against a wall or other similar obstacle, because, in this position, one cannot make the necessary circle with the cane to riposte.

To avoid this incorrect position one must, when retreating, prepare to thrust and, so the thrust has force, carry the left leg to the rear, but less than one would normally do for a riposte; so that the left leg lies next to the right leg, so one can lunge forwards, while thrusting, the hand always turned in tierce.
Feints

One can, while riposting, deceive the adversary, that’s to say, develop the riposte by the full three-quarter circle one normally uses to strike with a cane, and, seeing the adversary prepare to parry, make the cane describe another circle, to strike at a different place; for example: supposing that one ripostes to the head, the adversary raises his arm to make the parry, one must then change the direction of the blow to throw at the face &c., &c.

One can then do the same for all the other blows. To sum up, one must, after a feint, strike at the place where the adversary is exposed which, for the greater part, relies upon the perspicacity and quickness of the fencer.

*Here are some classifications of feints.*

Feint a strike at the head, to strike the leg, if the adversary does not slip it when making a parry.

Feint a strike at the head, outside, to strike inside.

Feint a strike at the face, inside, to strike outside.

Feint a head blow, to strike at the kidneys.

Feint a face blow, outside, to strike at the leg.

Feint a head blow, to throw a rising blow, &c.
Defence against several adversaries, called a “barrage”

In an onslaught one is served by blows called “doubles” and “voltes”.

Doubles

These blows are called “doubles” because they are thrown with great speed, so that the adversary will parry the first blow but not be able to riposte instantly before a second blow arrives.

Method for composing doubles

The cane placed on the left shoulder, wrist near the shoulder, right leg to the fore, one must, to throw a face blow, extend the arm horizontally, hand turned to tierce; then, the tip of the cane stopped in front of you, raise the arm to the left side and at full stretch, to place the cane horizontally, advance the left leg to the fore, pivot on the right toe, in such a way that one faces to the rear and develop a second face blow, equally, with some force, so that the cane returns to its place on the right shoulder.

After having learned how to compose these well, one must practice throwing two blows, while at the same time advancing the leg. The first blow must strike in front, and the second behind; to do this, one must pivot well on the toe, in such a way that one has great ease in turning the body.
Method for throwing doubles in all four directions while pivoting on the same foot

To pivot on the left foot, the cane must be placed on the right shoulder, wrist near to the shoulder and the left leg to the fore; one must extend the arm, turning the hand to quarte, and develop a face blow, while stopping the tip of the cane in front of you. To throw the second blow one must protect oneself with a head parry, arm extended to the right, hand placed in tierce, while at the same time advancing the right leg along the same line as the left. Next, facing to the left, bend the arm, while developing a face blow with force, in such a way that the cane will then find itself on the left shoulder. You can then continue to pivot on the same foot, throwing a face blow with force in order to make the cane pass from one shoulder to the other.

For the second direction, one must, the cane placed on the shoulder, while developing a face blow on a quarter turn, advance the right leg along the same line as the cane stops; and, to develop the second face blow, raise the arm on the right side, as a head parry, and, bending it, strike vigorously on the left side, such that the cane is returned to the left shoulder.

To continue this on the third and fourth direction, one changes the cane from one shoulder to another with a face blow.

This means of defence is very useful in an altercation against several people, all at the same time, and when one finds oneself in a confined space.

Doubles from a pivot on the left foot can be made equally from the right foot; only one must cover in quarte, instead of covering in tierce, when you pass the left foot forward, in the same way that you pass the right.

Doubles are the blow that will serve you when you are in a barrage, or when there is not much room.
Voltes

Three face blows done while jumping are called “voltes”. But before they can be done it is necessary to learn them without jumping. Here is the method:

Voltes developed in tierce.

On guard, one must place the cane on the left shoulder and extend the arm while making a face blow, hand in tierce, the tip of the cane staying in front of you; then, passing the left leg in front, while at the same time raising the arm, toward the left side, the hand in quarte, the cane placed horizontally, the body made to face the right, the hand returned to tierce, the tip of the cane staying in front of you, as in the first blow; and, before the leap finishes, raise the arm on the left side, the cane again placed horizontally, pass the right leg behind the left while placing it on the same line, and removing yourself by about three paces to the left, while developing a third face blow to the right, in such a way that the cane lands on the fencer’s right shoulder.

Voltes developed in quarte

One must, while on guard, place the cane on the right shoulder, left leg to the fore. Extending the arm while throwing a face blow, hand placed in quarte, the tip of the cane staying in front of you; then pass the right leg in front while raising the arm in a head parry of tierce on the right side and when facing the left; bend the arm, to develop the second face blow on the left, the tip of the cane staying in front of you, as with the first blow, hand turned to quarte, then raise the arm on the right as a head parry, hand in tierce, pass the left leg behind the right, removing yourself by about three paces, while facing to the left, bend the arm, and develop a third face
blow with force, so that the cane arrives on the fencer’s left shoulder, for a right-hander.

To leap in the same way, either on the same line, or to the side, it is enough to throw a face blow which passes from one shoulder to the other.

Method for volting while leaping, position of tierce.

The cane placed on the left shoulder, fist near the shoulder, right leg placed to the fore, one must, while extending the arm and striking the face, hand turned to tierce, the tip of the cane staying in front of you, raise the arm on the left side above the head, hand turned to quarte, and leaping forward on the left toe and pivoting, develop the second face blow behind you; then, while passing the right foot on the same line as the left, raise the arm, hand turned to quarte, to develop the third face blow with force, in such a way that the cane returns to the fencer’s right shoulder.

Method for volting while leaping, position of quarte.

The cane is placed on the right shoulder, fist near the shoulder, the left leg placed to the fore, one must, extending the arm and striking the face, hand turned in quarte, the tip of the cane staying in front of you, raise the arm on the right side above the head, the hand turned in tierce; and, leaping forward on the toe of the right foot and pivot, develop a second face blow behind you; then, while passing the left foot on the same line as the right, raise the arm, hand turned in tierce, to develop the third face blow with force, in such a way that is returned to the fencer’s left shoulder.
Voltes serve well in an open space.

It is essential that, after each turn, when throwing several face blows which pass from one shoulder to another, one knows to strike with considerably less force with a volte than with a double.

It is also necessary, when one feels tired, to choose a place where there are less people about; there, one can recover one’s strength, taking care to place one’s cane tip low down, in such a way that that one is able to receive the blow of the first adversary who arrives to strike you anew.

Doubles and leaps struck with speed by a pupil who has received all 25 lessons, can be made up of 150 face blows in the first minute.

Respect voltes while leaping and feints, the theory of which has been explained very clearly. It is only by demonstration and practice that one will come to acquire considerable force in performing these blows.

NOTE: This theory is written for right-handers. When a left-hander faces a right-hander, blows designated by the expression “outside” and “inside” should have the opposite meaning for them than for a right-hander.