

# THE ART OF CANE FENCING

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by  
Liborio Vendrell y Eduart  
Printed in Vitoria  
Printing house of the widow and children of Iturbe  
1881  
Translated by Enrique Sanchez, edited by Philip T. Crawley  
of the  
Black Boar School of Swordsmanship, Edinburgh  
September 2014

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French Africa  
Argelia  
To Mr Lionel de Braucies  
Engineer Corps Coronel  
Nemours

Dear Lionel,

For many years now I owe you a remembrance of gratitude. When I started the first page of my *comic journey* I thought about dedicating it to you, but then I changed my mind. I did not want to bring to your memory scenes and events that, without any doubt, you would want to forget forever. Antibes and Montpellier form a poem whose first verses are all due to your initiative. They are a splendid yesterday: valour, elegance, youth, generosity, beauty and misery, everything in adorable combination.

Do not forget, no; disobey the sentence dictated by Time and do not let your heart feel the cold of ageing.

Finishing my new book I remember you and put it under your aegis. Defend it as well as you know how to, being clearly needed because it is worth so little that I can almost assure that it is worthless and *laus tibi Christi*.

I finish now this letter with these three words because I have just spoken to you of the Gospel.

Bye dear Lionel, a strong hug and the everlasting fondness of your always loving friend.

Liborio Vendrell  
Vitoria, 24<sup>th</sup> October 1880

## INTRODUCTION

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That Character is the son of Temperament is not in doubt. Neither is it doubted that a human being, rather often and from the first moment, is dragged by the blood pumping in his heart and becomes bewildered and crazy. He then acts mechanically and, frequently without realising his acts, will perform violent acts beyond his strength. Once these acts are done it is impossible to regret them and, due to dignity, he suffers the consequences of his intemperance. Lacking of such ability, he will then appear in shame from his disgraceful defeat.

A harmonic unity must exist between the genius and circumstances in order to determine the act; that is why he has to know himself. The cane is used in the region of Santander and in the mountains in Leon, in the Principality of Asturias and in some regions in Galicia; in France, in the Auvergne and in the Franche-Comte; in Portugal, in the Alta and Baixa Beiras, and this natural weapon, this defence not punishable by law, is not known by any other except by the people that use it.

When a cane is at hand we hit with it and its results a primitive blow lacking from the intelligent foundation of the art because the important question is only to hit, hit correctly and not be hit, otherwise, there is no need to bother. The game of the cane is only useful when well-integrated, when the fencer is skilled and when he hits without being hit.

The rules are precise and in this type of fencing, as in many others, the general body position helps and contributes to the desired success.

It is known and axiomatic that for two fencers under equal conditions of strength, agility, dexterity and valour the one who loses is the first to be distracted and, because of this, it is recommended to study and practice.

This is the sole way to find the solution to this equation because the one who learns can ignore the sum of unbeatable difficulties, which are very difficult when the subject is unknown or when it is supposedly known but truly is unknown, when pride exceeds intelligence, when satisfaction of the ignorant highlights the individual lack of skills.

Well, before raising a flag covered in *non possumus* sums in letters of great size to justify the impossibility of reaching a satisfactory result, let us study and work properly, being sure that there is nothing that can stop the firm willpower and intelligence of a human being.

## FIRST PART

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### I. PRELIMINARY NOTIONS

Behind every book, there is a more or less feasible idea where we seek a practical result of carrying the reader or student into the subject he wishes to be in. It is said that a cane is only a cane, although it is true that it can break a bone, which is as much a problem as any other.

Against an assertion like this there are no possible arguments; but fortunately, as common men appreciate the problem from different perspectives and impassive calm has its own limits, it is wise to know how to use it to strike and avoid being beaten, which is the problem to which a solution is shown here.

Ease of movement, steadiness, aplomb, strength, calm and a good glance are indispensable talents for the fencer. We know that these are difficult or impossible conditions to gather but we consider the perfect fencer to be a template to measure the student against in order to lead away from minor errors when learning correctly from a good school.

Of all the defects the most severe, the one which leads to fatal consequences, is indulgence: a fencer, in the moment of fighting, has to measure his opponent, appreciating his value and planning his attack, the possible alternatives of a received hit and fatigue. Circumstances and details only presented in the field can cause a change in the first idea, but we are absolutely sure that its essence will always prevail. United in force, well balanced, cautious to the most insignificant movement while remaining calm and of fixed purpose, the fencer attacks or defends.

To judge the cane to be an insignificant weapon is an error. The cane is a fearsome weapon when used with intelligence, and worthy of full attention for the services it can be used for. Let's go to meet it; as for blades perfection is sought in their assembly, proportions, temper, shape and resistance so the cane has also to meet some conditions in order to be considered a weapon.

Its dimensions are not negligible. The cane has to measure approximately seventy five centimetres in length and two centimetres in diameter, being built with holly, *ascario*, or straight grain oak: perfectly smooth with no holes or strap to hold it. The cane, when correctly used, does not come out from the hand easily.

Cane fencing has its own characteristics, it is possible to use it with both hands thus multiplying its effect and, when moved from one hand to the other easily, neither play nor time are lost and this system has the advantage that hits to the hand can be prevented when making parries because, as a weapon without hilt protection and yet used for defence, the opponent's cane could slide along the fencer's cane, hitting his hand, especially in the parries protecting the first region of the body.

In all tempos and attacks, when hitting the opponent cane, the blow must be firm, avoiding slipping by controlling the wrist flexion and the pressure provided by the thumb and the fore-fingers that determine direction.

In cane fencing, similar to foil, epee and sabre, the shoulder has to be loose in order for the arms to move freely and should be able to flex correctly; on the contrary, with clumsy movements, bad attacks and failing parries or *quites*, the fencer will be at his opponent's mercy, who will easily take advantage. Furthermore, without the recommended flexibility, lightness and gracefulness that should never be forgotten, the general body position would be rigid as if one solid object.

Movements must be fast, timely and measured in order not to move forwards too much or to fall behind; *de recto* movement is to move forward, *de extraño* movement is to move backwards and the same goes when moving forward or retreating; serenity and aplomb must be conserved, striking when you should and not rushing when the enemy exposes himself.

There are moments when a clever and devious fencer seems indulgent and, at a respectful distance, opens himself to a violent attack from his excited and thoughtless opponent seeking to achieve a victory based in this opportunity. This is the most fearful opponent in the field as, as a result of not knowing of it and not being cautious enough, the fencer is caught out by this trick. But let's leave details that can be only known through practice, as even considering an impeccable theory, knowledge alone will never be enough to appreciate exactly the dexterity, strength, intention, lightness and ease that can be revealed through competent practice.

To conclude then, considering what little is left to explain of the different positions of the body during a fight and achieving the use of the cane with enough attitude and intelligence to appreciate it correctly. In this style, the knowledge of leg position is so essential that, even considering a superior strength and dexterity, it is difficult to achieve any advantage without the perfect knowledge of the system. In any other case, defence will be absolutely unsafe and a blow will lack opportunity and range. Given this, this important consideration deserves a thorough study to base what will be mentioned after.

Movements are two: simple and composite. A simple movement is one executed in a single time and a composite movement is the one executed in two or more times.

A fencer has two sides: inside and outside, corresponding to the chest and the back respectively. Once the fencers are prepared for combat, the inside of one corresponds to the outside of the other and vice-versa. Considering this scenario we will start with our lessons.

## II. EXTENDED POSITION (STARTING POSITION)

It is easily seen that the cane fencer faces the opponent while showing the smallest target possible and, using either one hand or the other, must not cover the left shoulder because the slightly forward chest and the flexed waist will produce a proper leg position, as will be shown.

The head must be erect, with no affectation, the chest as mentioned above, loose shoulders, the body perpendicular over the hips, hands to the flanks, flexible waist, the weight of the first region slightly supported by the left leg, loose legs without a forced contact in order to conserve the aplomb and equilibrium, the right leg looser than the left in order to be able to respond to the required movement and the feet forming a ninety degree angle.



Plate 1. Figure 1.

## III. GUARD

Before standing on guard in front of the opponent, distance must be measured by sight, taking into consideration the distance that both opponents can achieve either in this position or in the lunge when needed. This measure is essential and indispensable. Guard position is this position in which the fencer starts the fight, and can be divided in two types: offensive and defensive.

#### IV. OFFENSIVE GUARD

From the starting position, the right foot must be moved forward the distance of about one foot, without deviating from the theoretical straight line determined by the general position of the opponent. The left leg must remain straight without raising the foot from the floor, this being obtained by having a slightly flexed ankle, in order to get a better standing point and the right knee perpendicular to the instep, thus being able to achieve a position that avoids any involuntary advance or tilt, which would be always dangerous.

In different fencing treatises we have explained and showed the convenience of a straight left leg in the offensive guard and the reasons for it are very important. The first region of the body easily moves and weaves in order to avoid a blow or because of a hesitant attitude due to weak aplomb: then the position breaks down, the knees are loosened and feet change their place, thus it becomes possible to get entangled, to be beaten or to fall over and these situations are avoided by achieving the position described above.

The legs, when appropriately positioned, act as two powerful springs. The right knee, when perpendicular to the instep, maintains the body in the same line. The left leg, with the foot completely resting on the floor through the flexed ankle, avoids any involuntary backwards movement thus allowing for steadiness, a folded waist and a slightly forward chest, with the shoulders and arms more free and the energy prepared for the moment to act. In one single sentence: it allows a complete disposition with enough freedom for any action.

The ridiculous positions of the acrobat or the aerialist do not belong here and are, therefore, inadequate for the fencing seriousness; one makes an effort to entertain, the other works to kill. That is the difference.



Plate 1. Figure 2.

## V. DEFENSIVE GUARD

The defensive guard moves the fencer away from the opponent, putting him out of measure momentarily. It is of recognised utility and its practice produces good results if the position is secure. The explanation is; from the offensive guard straighten the right leg without raising the foot from the floor, bending the left leg at the knee and moving the upper region of the body backwards as necessary. The previous position is achieved by undoing the movement.



Plate 1. Figure 3.

## VI. AFONDO (LUNGE)

As said by Mr de Brindisi, when explaining his lessons:

*A fight is a game of chess where intelligence is always the victor*

And this wise master, who practice gained his superior talent due to many years of, could not be wrong having dealt with such studies for his entire life. His sword hurt with the speed of lightning. It was difficult, if not impossible, to stop one of his blows. He hit wherever he wanted to. When he suffered tetanus paralysis there were moments which no doubt had an effect on the lightness had developed. He perfectly possessed the majestic charm of skill and elegance. His school was admirable. So, this master, this athlete of weapons, when describing the secret of the art to his pupils, used to say, with the confidence and the poise that gives you conviction, supported by the satisfactory results achieved in his successful career, <sup>1</sup>.

*The legs fence as the hands do.*

This is a truth that can be fully admired. A strong, skilled and light hand which follows the movements of the enemy, always finding the weak point in

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<sup>1</sup> This master did not write anything and at his death in Naples in 1869, his huge amount of knowledge, as result of a life full of adventures and work was pitifully lost.



them, making deviations easily, arriving at a parry quite instinctively, without noticing why, is, with no doubt, a great concern. But the complement of this powerful agent are the legs, the regulator which gives the essential confidence and poise which supports the body maintaining it in a firm position, which gives the measure and, at last, which allows it to hit. Without the intelligent combination of their times, without the opportunity of their implementation, the effect of the hands is null. This theory is the art's cornerstone.

Certainly we could be immersed in a digression toward such high matters but the fact does not deserve it. When we publish our book "Fencing with epee and foil" the aficionados will be able to find as many details as they wish. Meanwhile let's say something about the lunge, the object of this page, thus closing the chapter.

The lunge is an extension of the offensive guard to the front, as we have said many times, and we do not think it necessary to look for any other more logical or simpler explanation. But whereas the description is easy, the performance is difficult. The art of performing a lunge, the form, the gracefulness, the general body position, shows more than any other thing, if the fencer worthless. A sloppy position reveals a mediocre education; the fault of the master who did not correct it, and the indolence, neglect and lack of skills of the student.

To teach is precisely to have a competency which allows one to have a system and to form a school, otherwise the results will be negative.

In some schools of France and Italy we have observed that this defect is not very evident due to the great care when performing their first lessons and the importance granted to the position; clear evidence of the artistic intelligence they admirably have. This can be demonstrated by showing the advantages of one method over another: explained, performed, certainty is then acquired, thus conviction arrives and, as result, consequences are necessary accepted.

Returning to the starting point we will say; being in offensive guard to lunge, bending the waist and the first region of the body and staying in the vertical that serves as an axis, the right leg is moved forwards and straight on, more or less for a pace, placing the sole gently on the ground, without a thud or any effort. The left leg will seem more stretched; but without raising the sole from the ground, this being achieved by flexing the ankle. The waist will give us a position with the chest slightly forwards and pulling the shoulders back, head upright, without affectation, slightly turned over the right shoulder and eyes to the front.

The movement must be quick, very fluid, and the body, in general, has to be in a firm and graceful position, without hesitation and certain. Those doubtful movements, those fluctuating movements caused by the lack of aplomb in the first body region, are the logical consequence of a false position and they show weakness and hesitation, not making the fencer fearsome. The right leg must go out in front as if driven by a spring, not with any violence but gently, and, when fencing with a weapon or cane, it is



accompanied by the hand in its movement, developing a speed only comparable with a flash of lightning, then, the hit is sure and has fatal consequences.

The sole of the right foot should be put down on the ground completely, suddenly and without making any excessive noise and then we will have a firm, safe position and we will satisfy the dynamic and aesthetic rules, having an attitude that reveals our knowledge and demonstrating that we know how to artistically kill.

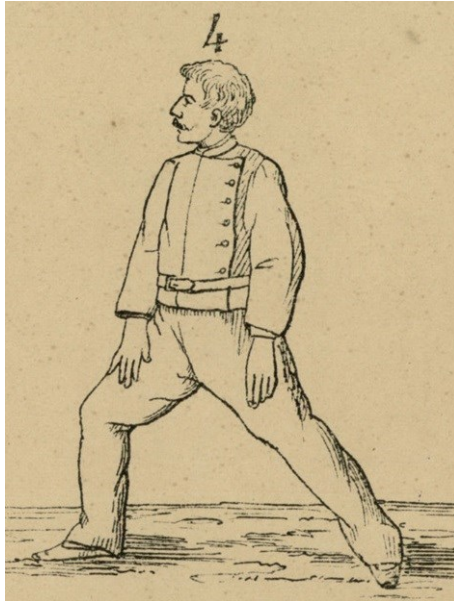


Plate 1. Figure 4.

#### VII. REVERSE THE LUNGE POSITION

The objective of reversing this figure is to avoid a hit when the force of the weapon of our opponent is greater than ours or it is considered to be too late to parry. It is a matter of opportunity and duly satisfies the desire of the fencer when a lightning fast blow is performed against an exposed defence.

To execute the movement have in mind the things that were mentioned in page 18, defensive guard.

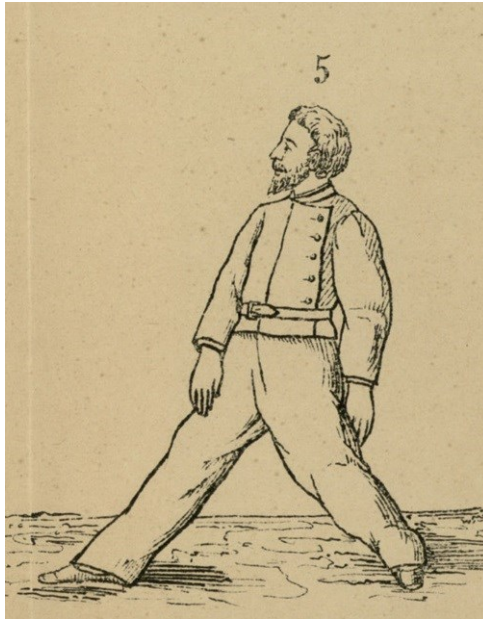


Plate 1. Figure 5.

#### VIII. LEG BACKWARDS OR SEGUNDA

This movement has two objectives which occur under different circumstances; the first one is to keep the right leg out of the way of the enemy's weapon and the second is to move backwards at first and return to guard position.

The first is performed as; being in the offensive guard, the left leg is slightly bent, supporting the weight of the upper region of the body in the hip on the same side in order to lighten the right leg. The right leg is then bent with a rapid movement and placed behind the left leg, placing the first third of the foot sole on the ground and the toe looking to left heel.

The second; from the previous described position, the left foot is moved backwards, carefully considering the distance between the feet when performing the offensive guard position. The leg is then stretched and we make the right foot to turn to the outside, placing the heel and without forgetting that the right knee must be perpendicular to the instep.

As a result of joining these movements, a step of great effect and use can be made while staying on guard at distance to see if the opponent moves and also being able to prepare a blow. The supporting bases are not separated from the ground in all movements, either forwards or backwards and even when moving long distances, they do not raise too much and when touching the ground after performing the steps it will be done with the first phalanges, never with the heel and avoiding all vertical action that could cause a painful injury.

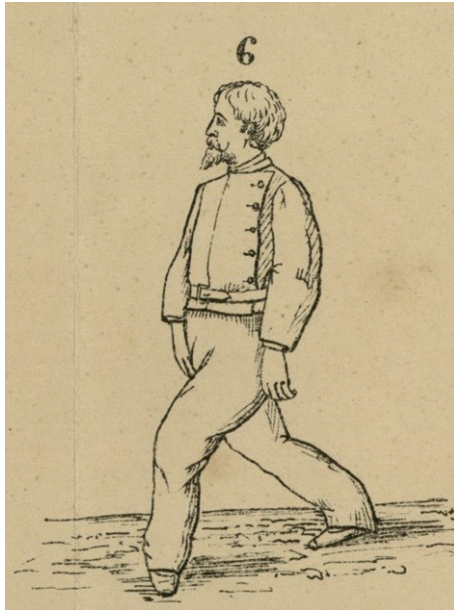


Plate 1. Figure 6.

#### IX. TREPIDATION

As we cannot find nor do not have any other explanation that meets our thinking so dutifully, apart from the one we have given in fencing with sabre, modern school, we will therefore put it here; the trepidation is a very violent and continuous repetition of the lunge from the extended position or guard without touching the ground with the right foot while undoing the figure. This movement requires all the skills and aplomb of the fencer, and without them it is not possible to get the desired result; even trying is dangerous if you are not sure how to perform it correctly. Its practice strengthens the leg muscles in a remarkable way. Its foundation is to interrupt your lunge in order to parry a hit and, quickly, repeat the lunge again.

The momentary unbalancing of the leg should be used to attack within the tempo determined for the blow, otherwise is not only impossible to hit but also to recover with the necessary aplomb to change position. This detail of high importance must be kept in mind in order to avoid falling and, together with it, an unstoppable hit.

## X. CONSOLIDATION

You may not think that this act deserve a proper chapter but, however, we consider it of great importance and we will try to describe it as its aim is to regain your posture. Some people will consider it as a challenge but it is quite far from it. The consolidation is to secure yourself, having been upset from strong posture and to amend any, if there is any, disequilibrium. It may also distract the opponent's attention and there is no doubt that, if used wisely, it is a useful resource.

One appel does not achieve its purpose, three does not do anything but tire you and gets ignored; two is the proper number<sup>2</sup>. Its performance is done thus: without changing the leg position, and basing your weight on the right heel, we softly raise the right sole and let it fall without effort, as otherwise it would cause the knee to move forwards. This will make a noise when touching the ground.

## XI. TURNS

There are two turns: inside and outside. Their objective is to escape from the line occupied by the body. They are performed as follows:

Turn from the inside: We raise the left foot, moving it away from the straight line. The heel will then go to the place where the toe was and then we bend the knee to support the first region of the body.

Turn from the outside: We move the left foot away from the straight line, placing it with the toe staying where the heel was, also resting the weight of the first region on the left knee. For this movement to be perfect and comfortable it must be accompanied by the right heel rotation, separating slightly the toe from the straight line previously drawn. We can return to the previous position by undoing the movement.

## XII. CHANGING THE LINE

When the opponent is strong and skilled a front attack is not enough. It is necessary to make him lose his attack, even for an instant, to break his defence or to expose his unprotected side. The change of line can be used in order to reach this target; this is just moving out from the straight line, then following a new line parallel or perpendicular to the previous one. As in the turns, these movements are made from the outside or from the inside.

Execution: If the variation is going to be parallel, the left foot moves forward without changing its position, placing it, as needed, at a distance of one or two feet from the previous site. If the variation is going to be vertical, the left foot moves, describing a semi-circle centred on the right foot, which is placed on the straight line and slightly inclined with respect to the vertical. It goes without saying that when one of the fencers changes his line the other must also change in order to be always protected and in the proper line.

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<sup>2</sup> The appel in fencing is the act of hitting the ground with the sole while maintaining the heel on the ground.

### XIII. MARCHA (ADVANCE OR FORWARD MOVEMENT)

With absolute immobility of the hand that holds the weapon, sight, calmness and trying not to move anything but the second body region which is the one that, at that moment, does the work. Under these conditions we slowly move, studying the opponent, following all his movements in order to hit him at the first opportunity. Being on guard, we start the movement by raising the right foot a bit with a slight push, in order for the heel to finish the movement where the toe was or slightly less far, depending on the need. The first part to be raised is the sole, following the heel and then by placing the foot on the floor. The left foot follows the movement without changing position and while maintaining measure.

When fighting, the complement of the advance is a backwards movement as there cannot be unity of action and one cannot be understood without the other and if calmness and ability are recommended for the advance they are also needed when moving backwards.

The difference between giving and receiving needs no explanation and is understood by everybody. A forwards movement is performed in the attack and a backwards movement is performed in order to cover against a blow, change the play, tire the opponent and prepare a blow or, when wounded, breath and time are needed to recover.

To move backwards; the left foot starts the movement, considering that the right heel is the first part to be raised from the floor, followed by the sole and placing the toe in the place previously occupied by the heel. When the opponent moves backwards in disarray it is timely to hit him and therefore we can use bigger movements. Being on guard or in the lunge the left leg is moved to the extended position, raising it over the hips and observing the rules described, starting with the right side to guard or lunge as needed.

When moving backwards the right leg is moved to the extended position, the left leg is moved backwards as straight as possible, placing the foot on the floor and bending the right leg as mentioned in the offensive guard. These movements can be repeated when being necessary.

### XIV. JUMPS

There are people who jump with extreme ease due to the prodigious flexibility of their joints. The greatest jumpers can be found in the East, and in India there are families with an astonishing agility that travel around the world doing strength feats. However, they can also be found where we are.

The Spanish coronel Amoros, a famous gymnast dedicated to teaching in Paris, once jumped a 30 foot wide ditch in the Buen Retiro, Madrid. Villalobos, one afternoon during a tour in the Manzanares prairie, jumped the canal while carrying a food platter in his hands. Even the famous Arcangel de Tuccaro, a famous Italian jumper, would admire the extent of and courage required for those jumps. Amoros and Blondeaux, the two slenderest acrobats who were showing their abilities in various circus across all Europe for many years at the time of the unforgettable Cinicelli, were not only able to jump huge distances but also dominated the *cubistico* as if their

muscles and joints were made from rubber and Keasthon steel. One called Montespan, born in Girgenti on the island of Sicilia who became a soldier in the Antibes region and of apparently weak constitution, astonished everyone who watched his performances as he had the agility of a monkey and the powerful strength of the first Greek and Roman athletes. We used to deal with him and his brilliant capacities. In his opinion, the trampoline was a useless object and certainly he did not need it, given the force of his own muscles when jumping. During a journey to Spain in the French transatlantic "Ville de Brest" he made incredible jumps, and one I will always remember was the following: he jumped over a hatchway with his feet tied and backwards. The people, the officers and the crew clapped frenetically and the cheers were heard for a long time. This remarkable being, this notable man, after a few years of being admired across the world, died miserably in Montpellier. He had a strange obsession with being embalmed alive through drinking huge amounts of alcohol. He knew that the liquid has the property of conserving flesh but surely he did not know that this virtue does not extend to flesh beyond death; a deplorable mistake which took his life.

It is difficult to jump correctly. Bodyweight has to be in direct relation with strength developed by the muscles in order to reach any height under appropriate conditions. A human being weights about seventy to seventy five kilograms<sup>3</sup> and needs a force two thousand times greater for his weight to be raised one metre from the floor; that is the difficulty of a somersault. In order to perform a jump in good condition the lower muscles work upwards and the legs are bent at the knees in order to reach for the natural tension that leads to a jump.

Having a brief idea of what a jump is we will show an artistic step that substitutes it in this case and reaches its target without resorting to means that require too much attention and uncommon skills. Whenever it is necessary to move out from the centre use an *estraño* movement, and *segunda* and *tercera* backwards will then be performed, joining both actions together in order for the fencer to finish in the guard position. No more is needed.

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<sup>3</sup> We are talking about the gymnast, the slender and agile person usually practising strength and dexterity exercises

## SECOND PART

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### I. GUARD

Knowing in detail about the importance of leg movements, having been persuaded of their absolute need and of being able to apply them with art and good use, we will show here, in the second part of this treatise, how to use the cane, object of our work. Until now all we have mentioned is of general use, with slight deviations, for all blades, and it can be then supposed that, when knowing any of these, the use of the cane will be easily performed. However, as most of the audience will ignore the theory and use of its play, it is wise to have an *excursus* before continuing.

The use of weapons requires aplomb, valour, strength, dexterity, good sight and intelligence. Without these essential conditions, without these necessary skills, is madness to become exposed and it is an unnecessary play with one's own life.

If we try to fence using the cane with only one hand we would not need further explanations as cane fencing satisfies all play needs; but if we increase the resources and follow the systems used in some schools, we will give it more use and importance. The left hand which has been until now completely passive will now be, using our rules, of the same importance as the right one and, to do so, we assume identical conditions of strength and agility, which can be acquired with a small effort. General arm flexion, shoulder and wrist looseness, in all their different movements, will allow us to use it without excessive force, allowing for the directing, strength and dexterity needed to hit and the precision, opportunity and resistance needed for defence in parries and *quites*.

To start cane fencing we recommend again aplomb, ease, attention, firmness, and sight, quickness in the attack and defence and fast recovery. The position from which the fencer is to present on guard is already known as it is described in the first part of this book. It only remains to put the cane in the hands to use it and follow the alternative plays, while relaxed and ready to attack and defend. Thus, prepared in offensive guard, the cane is gripped with both hands four or five centimetres from the ends, embracing it with the nails of all eight fingers facing down and the thumbs situated along the cane in order to provide more resistance and direction when needed. The arms should be extended with the centre of the cane resting on the right thigh.



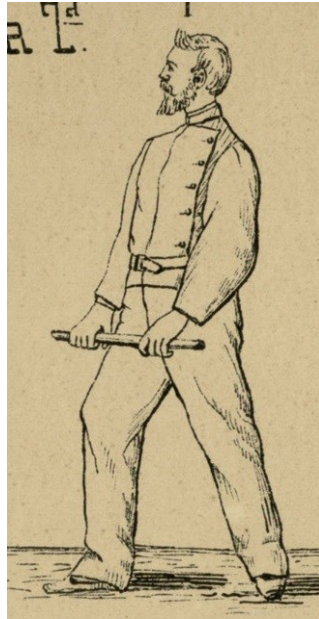


Plate 2. Figure. 1

## II. BLOWS AND BACKHANDS<sup>4</sup>

The blows are four, from right to left to hit the inside of the opponent. The backhands are also four, from left to right to hit the outside of the opponent.

## III. BLOW ONE AND BACKHAND ONE

The first blow, similar to the first backhand, hits directly to the upper part of the head with the only difference being that the first one is executed with the right hand and the second with the left. For the cane to be fenced with in one hand or the other, in order to hit quickly and precisely, it is necessary to keep track of the opponent's attitude and to know his dexterity and calmness because, with the only scope for this movement to distract his attention and make his defence change, if he perceives it the trick will be useless. Once the cane is handled with both hands at its ends the nails should be facing the opponent and the cane should be horizontally placed at the head height. If there is an intentional movement towards the opponent and a hand moves the opponent will correctly suppose that the blow or backhand comes from that side and will guard against it; or at least it will be supposed that this is about to happen, as it is the natural movement preceding a blow.

His attention is then distracted and the target can be chosen. Given that both hands have the same attitude, they are in similar positions and they can promptly respond to the desired movement the action is quite easy.

Let's see how this is practised; from the indicated position, to hit with blow one the left hand releases the cane and, without moving the right hand from its place, the cane is moved a quarter of a circle over the head, resulting in

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<sup>4</sup> For easiness and clarity, the word cut is substituted by blow and not having the cane an edge, a cut cannot be produced.

being perpendicular to it. Simultaneously, the arm is fully extended in order for the cane to hit the opponent's head horizontally and not going beyond the target under any circumstance in order to be able to cover when moving backwards. For backhand one the same explanation stands.

#### IV. BLOW TWO AND BACKHAND TWO

Blow two is different from the blow one as it describes a vertical circle. It is performed similarly to the previous one and it hits the head, shoulder and arms. The backhand is executed in the same way, keeping in mind that it is the left hand that executes the blow, hitting the right side of the opponent.

#### V. BLOW THREE AND BACKHAND THREE

From the same position, while releasing the left hand, the right hand provides the cane, with the nails facing up, with a strong and impulsive movement, describing horizontally three-quarters of a circle and hitting the face and neck. The backhand three hits the outer side in the same way.

#### VI. BLOW FOUR AND BACKHAND FOUR

This blow is vertical. With the fencer on guard, the left hand is released and the right hand is moved backwards with its nails facing down. The cane is turned from up to down and from the back to the front, inverting the hand position and resulting in the nails facing up. This blow hits the hip upwards and also the left arm. We could say something more regarding these blows and backhands by adding the sabre resources but we believe that what is mentioned here is enough to make use of the cane or staff with enough advantage from the first moment as we do not believe that a proper duel preceded by every necessary formality will be performed using such a vulgar instrument, the very sight of which would only bring degradation and ridicule.

#### VII. THRUST

We summarise and start a chapter showing a blow, trying to describe it and however, everything is still less than what is meant. This is illogical and it makes no sense not to call things by their own name.

A thrust is the act of stabbing with the tip of the weapon that is being used. For the stab to be considered a thrust the blade needs to penetrate and the hand, situated on the hilt, to feel the blade entering smoothly into the opponent's body, otherwise this would be a blow with no consequences.

The fighting cane has no tip and thus it cannot stab. The problem is that, with no other name to give, we present it with this one. The execution of this blow requires, more than any other, dexterity and calmness. It has to be executed when there is certain certainty of hitting the opponent and, therefore, by necessity much foresight, a good hand, close play, a hard, well-directed and sure blow, firm, quick and deep in its effect, in good measure, a skilled hand and good defence in case of an opponent's riposte are all

needed. The tendency of every beginning fencer is to protect the first region of the body by constantly moving the hand that holds the weapon and changing guard. During an exchange of blows this results in him receiving thrusts to the stomach that, due to their very nature, are very severe.

A well-directed thrust is, usually, a death strike and we go on about this here because we cannot remember if we have said this already and it has to be known. A strong hand, a steady and light, flexible wrist, loose arm and well-articulated shoulder that, without effort, will respond to the desired movement are the beautiful ideal of every smart fencer. Practice has shown that it is difficult to acquire these skills but between difficult and impossible there is an abyss that does not worry about who tries to jump it.

The thrust must be done after the parry, as it is more secure and less exposed than the one coming after the guard, and avoids a time that would close the game, counteracting its effect.

Thrusts are of two types: upper and lower. The upper ones hit the face and chest. The lower ones hit the stomach. There are three upper ones and two lower ones.

The first ones come into play after parries one, two and three and the second ones have their play after parries four and five. All of them are subject to different combinations that need to be known as their effect depends on the moment, opportunity and quickness developed by the fencer when acting. To perfectly understand the theories that are explained here it is necessary to study the parries, and only so as to put them in chronological order, they are explained after. Anyway we continue with the confidence that our effort will be completely rewarded.

One precedent observation for the following study; the diversity of skills that belong to the human being makes him more or less apt for a profession and, because of this, come great errors as a result of lamentable mistakes. To be dedicated to weapons, after considering everything that has been said in the development of this work, we think we need to propose the idea that just because something is very well known does not mean that it is always practised. We refer to the consideration of conformational defects that are difficult or impossible to correct.

The wrist, when not correctly flexed despite all the action and preparation performed, responds to a lack of organic attitude and this circumstance that we can call as "cause of the defect" points, within the art, to a lack of skills that neither the study or the use facilitates, being only the heritage of exceptional conformations that only a few have<sup>5</sup>.

Knowledge of the hand and how to use it for strength and dexterity exercises presents in its study serious difficulties to solve. Its joints and ligaments to the forearm, the order and action of muscles, the movements that can perform and the positions that it takes must be known in detail to make it

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<sup>5</sup> It is in the foil were this defect is more detectable

work within its capacities but as we do not pretend to teach an anatomy course to our audience we will stop to continue with the interrupted lesson.

Well, we now have an idea of what a thrust is and we can now try to use it, looking forward for the opponent's movement against our action in order to avoid a head hit that would disable us, something that can happen when we have not hit our opponent, thus having performed a lost hit. That is why the distance between both fencers has to be measured and the blow has to be studied in such a precise way that there must not be the minimum deviation from the previously stated objective. This is in reference to the cane; with blades the importance of the blow is considerably greater, resulting in the exquisite accuracy that distinguish the movements of a good fencer, the embodied fencer who gives accurate hits; that refines them so much that they can pass a blade through a child's teething ring. In the end, we can affirm that a good sword fencer is as good as a doctor that performs an operation.

Thus, this ability is a blazon, a superior signal that, joined with modesty, unites into an invaluable skill.

The haughtiness, the excessive reliance and the *posum* disregard are a challenge to fate, a dream with a horrible wake-up.

Let's determine the thrusts. We have said that the thrust is the act of stabbing; stabbing deep in order to kill or disable and here, only talking about the cane, we only require for it to be a more-or-less strong hit, better or worse directed, that stops the opponent in his movement. Therefore, to finish this chapter with the best masters: *The thrust must be reserved for extreme cases*. This is the *prolegomenon* of what will be said after.

## VIII. UPPER THRUSTS

First of all we will play using three blows, three parries and, after, the three upper thrusts. I would like to show with practice the secret of their use, but this being impossible let us hear what experience dictates.

Supposing that the opponent tries to hit with blow one, we apply the parry one, performed to counteract the blow effect and, at the same time, we try to push the opponent's cane to our left side, in order for the end of our weapon to threaten the opponent, without changing its horizontal position. A simultaneous and very fast movement of arms and legs is the complement to this play.

The right hand moves forward to the inside and moving backwards the left one to the outside, both perform a turn of a quarter-circle. Then the legs movement is performed to the centre and, moving forward the hands without releasing the cane, we execute the thrust to the outside face, this means the right side. The hand position will then result in the nails facing left.

When somebody tries to hit us with backhand one and, after the parry to this hit, we try a thrust, moving the hands in the same way as explained,

with the only difference being that the left hand is the one that is moved forward and the right hand is the one that retreats, both with the nails facing to the outside. The leg movement turns to the centre and moves the left chest forwards we quickly perform a thrust that hits the face in its left side or inside.

If we try to hit with a thrust after parry two, we will use the same movements as when avoiding backhand one. We will try to follow the direction of the opponent's cane, as when hitting us with backhand two, he can move the cane down and, in that case, he will receive the thrust in the chest.

If a thrust over parry three is desired the same movements as in the first one are used, when the first blow is parried and the thrust is to the chest with ease, flexibility and a determined attitude.

#### IX. LOWER THRUSTS

The lower thrusts have their play after the parries four and five, which are performed, as already known, to prevent blows four and backhand. If backhand four is performed against us, we will use parry four pushing the opponent's cane, lowering the left hand and moving the right upwards, in order for the cane to be almost horizontal at the right hip. Then, and with a strong impulse forwards, the thrust is performed to hit the stomach. The legs movement is a turn to the centre. If we use the thrust after parry five we will push the opponent's cane to the left, moving the hands in that direction and, with the right in front of the left, the thrust will be performed. The legs move to the centre.

#### X. THRUST DEFENCE

Defending from thrusts, in the case depicted here regarding the cane, requires some leg movements that are commonly named *slipping* and artistically named *voidance and traversing the line*. Given that these movements are already known or can be easily learnt we will explain their effect when used in a timely fashion.

The action of *slipping or voiding* has the scope, as a backwards movement, to allow the fencer to come out of measure in order to avoid a thrust, gaining time and stopping it. If there is not enough terrain to perform it or it is difficult or dangerous, we use *traversing* where we deviate from the line in which the opponent makes the thrust at the same time as we perform parries two and three if they are upper thrusts and the parries four and five if they are lower thrusts.

Once the thrusts and their parries are known, the well-prepared man precede all fencing acts by being certain, strong and light in the hand, not rushing, using measure and common sense, and, when he tries to hit, does attack honour by uttering insults or invective. Given that these theories are based on experience, what we mention here has a corollary that, translated

to the common language, can be read as: *The exact observance of rules, calmness and wise valour are, thus, the creed's trinity for the fencer.*

Empiricism loses against the doctrine.

#### XI. FIST BLOW OR "BOXER"

This blow is a trick, like any other, and when correctly used only rarely does it not work. It is thus necessary to prepare it in order to hit the target. It has its place after the upper parries to defend the first region of the body. The foot movement is to the centre, being in guard one and quick thrust four to hit the opponent. With the cane held with both hands, the left is released. The right hand, with the nails facing out moves backwards. Then, just like doing a feint, the fist is moved upward and forward trying to hit the face. The face is the target for this blow. It is a resource, but a poor resource. The teacher will refine the blow by placing the student in a situation good enough to allow him to use it correctly.

#### XII. TEMPO

This is a precise blow; measured, quick, artistic and, although its effect is rarely severe, it will disable the opponent for a moment before continuing the duel afterwards. It requires lightness and great dexterity as well as choosing the proper moment to perform it. Some fencers perform it during the attack; there is no reason for doing this.

We will use it in the defence and, to justify this, we have a very strong argument, whose explanation will come after. This blow stops the game and holds the opponent in check as he cannot move the arm or he will receive a hit. It hits but without further consequences.

There is some inconvenience to learning it as it is necessary to study it deeply. Here the theory never reaches the advantages of practice, and we need it to justify this as if we only practice it we cannot only expect much.

Let us pay attention then.

Tempo is the act of reaching out and hitting while the opponent is attacking. To do this it is necessary that the arm receives the hit when completely extended and when the fencer is thrusting. Thus, and not before or after, as the foot is moved is when he will receive the hit. The counter-argument to this is that, in this case, recovering is very difficult and if we do not manage to hit the arm we will be completely exposed.

When duelling with the cane, if the target is not hit, the dangerous problem is to receive a hit to the head so that it swells like a balloon because there is no possible defence. Although we can use a parry, change defence or line and we will be always late if the opponent is well trained.

It is a blow that is refined gradually and whose satisfactory results are desirable; it is a good resource when wanting to knock the opponent out without a severe wound. It is generally used when moving backwards; very

slowly and cautiously looking for the opportune moment. We have studied this blow a lot and we know it well.

Among the different fencers we have seen practicing, learning from them much of the few things that we know, there is one famous for his marvellous dexterity and strength, a polish nobleman that hid his illustrious name under the pseudonym of "Atilano Monti". This interesting gentleman was, for a long time, my master and friend and his memory will eternally live in my mind. When he did not want the opponent to move, it did not happen, and he made an action with such a prodigious measure that there was no way to avoid it.

This adventurous earl lived in Spain for many years and, when returning, he served as a Polish lancer in the times when Poland was shaken by one of these movements that has cost so much in the blood of their brave sons and tears of their beautiful daughters. Arrested and imprisoned, with the call for freedom strangled in his throat, he died a few months later exiled to the immense Siberian steppes and this generous and noble heart paid sacrifice with his life to his motherland<sup>6</sup>.

He had willpower of a high degree and a magnificent power of the soul. Today, with his name upon my lips, let us doff our hats to salute him. *May he be free from disgrace*

### XIII. PARRIES

Parries must be performed, always when needed, where the blow is coming from in order to counter its effect with a single movement and without frills or too much confidence, which can be very dangerous. The enemy deserves our attention; even if he seems idle and lacking in dexterity and even if we are persuaded of his lack of ability and of our superiority. We should claim the interest of he who wishes to reach legitimate triumph but never being too confident and never despising the opponent.

The great Ercilla, the famous singer from the Araucana comes to support this in one of his poems:

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<sup>6</sup> In that time I was ill in Viterbo, Italy, where I arrived from the *Palestra Gimnastica* in Milano and I entertained myself taking notes and figures to illustrate a new book that I will print soon: *Military campaigns of the Great Captain Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordoba*, when I received the news about the death of my dear friend. Immediately I sent some notices to be published in newspapers in France, where he was well known, at the same time that the newspapers in Rome published his biography, with many points being quite disingenuous given the attitude of these media usually fantastic.

My trip to England, the death duel in Oxford, the severe incidents in Saint Malo with the police, his stance in Madrid, everything in the end forms a golden combination that enhances his figure and the spirit.

This ended as everything ends, and only remain the memories of what it was.



*Never, must, Sire despise the living enemy,  
as we know that a spark can wake a fire  
that will scorch us after  
and then it is wise to be wary  
when he sees us in great happiness  
because the ones that enjoy prosperity  
are more vulnerable to it being taken from them*

And his opinion is not baseless, for at the same time as he was a poet was he was also a courageous soldier.

As in the attack it is recommended to have aplomb and firmness of posture in order for the blow to be strong and secure. It is undoubtedly needed in defence to keep the feet on the floor. Otherwise the trembling in the leg will be transmitted to the hand and it will be easy to receive a hit that will be more severe concerning the unprotected body part. We also want to say that the fencer must never depart from the described rules, because the theory in them is always applicable to practice.

When the body is upright and is moved properly the arm works freely and without effort and the parries adjust to the incoming blows in such a way that hand movements in the upper defences are not advertised.

In defence the parry always takes the opportunity generated by the weapon when following the line, thus making it difficult to receive a hit but, if we do something out of approved theory, the result is uncertain as we will probably receive an indelible mark in our body indicating our clumsiness.

The bruise produced by a cane is usually severe, often due to the higher sensitivity of the body part and the shock caused in the nervous system due to its strength and violence. Given this, it is necessary to defend; covering the target by using the brilliant art that corresponds. If we do not do it, leaving defence to chance or if we act late due to awkwardness in the use of weapons, we will receive our reward. Fencing is an integral part of a gentleman's education and in high society a sword dictates reason by defending correctly. Weapons and horses are the essence of their gentility. A shot will sound in an unaware person's field of vision and it will be too late before we can admire the magical results of its effect.

We have paused too much and need to continue.

Defence is interesting because, when attacking, we only raise a foot and nothing else. It is necessary to establish an intelligent reciprocity between both games and this is performed by much study and practice; performing the art step by step to gain its secrets, secrets that have such high prices that they cannot be paid with pocket money, and there are moments when even all the money in the world cannot pay for them.

Once the truth of what has been said is understood we will try to pay our debt, only considering that the "having" of our ability is of greater value than the "debt" of our desire.

There are seven parries.

The first one defends the head from blow one and backhand one, and it is formed as follows: from guard the cane is slightly raised over the head, inclined forwards while maintaining its horizontality; the nails facing front.

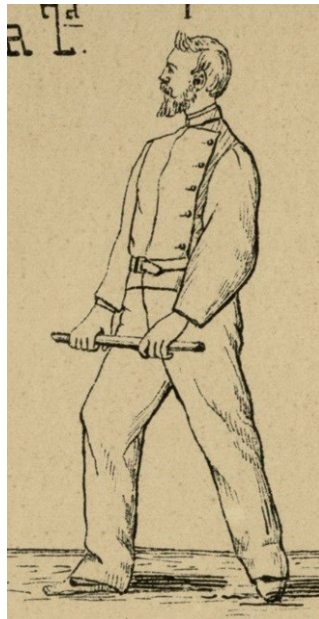


Plate 2. Figure 1.

The second protects the head and shoulders from the outside, this means, the right side, and to prepare the cane it is necessary to lower the right hand to the chest side, raising the left hand up to the forehead and maintaining the cane in vertical position.

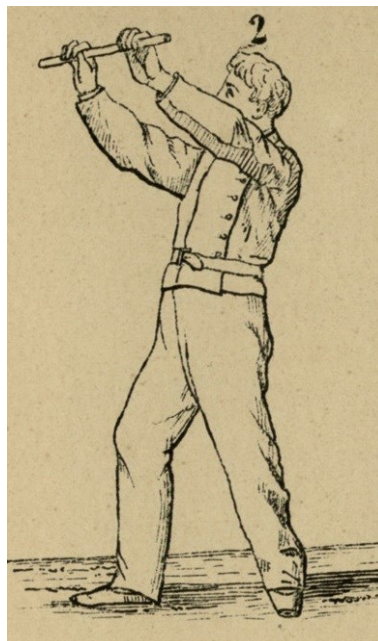


Plate 2. Figure 2.

The third one protects the head and shoulder on the left side and to practice it we have to invert the movement described for the second one. A useful observation that has to be kept in mind is that both blow two and backhand two, whose effects are counteracted by this parry, can be performed on this line seeking a target, and in this case, the defence must follow the movement, thus being raised or lowered to match.



Plate 2. Figure 3.

To form the fourth parry the right hand that holds the cane by its extreme is lowered to the thigh and, simultaneously, the left arm is separated from the first body region resulting in the hand situated in the front of the right nipple. Then, the cane is moved forwards to reach the vertical with the thigh.

This parry defends the arm and right hip from backhand four.

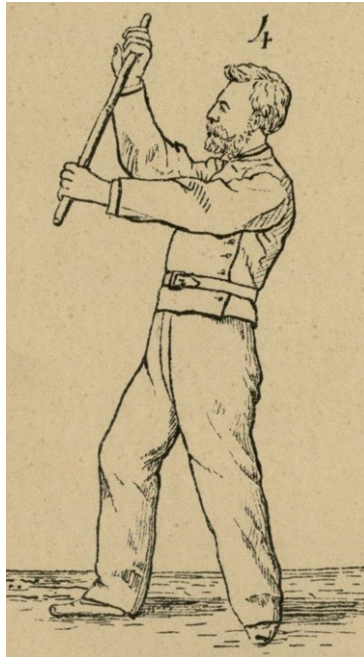


Plate 2. Figure 4.

Parry five is formed in the same way over the left side, inverting the position described and protecting the arms and left hip from blow four.

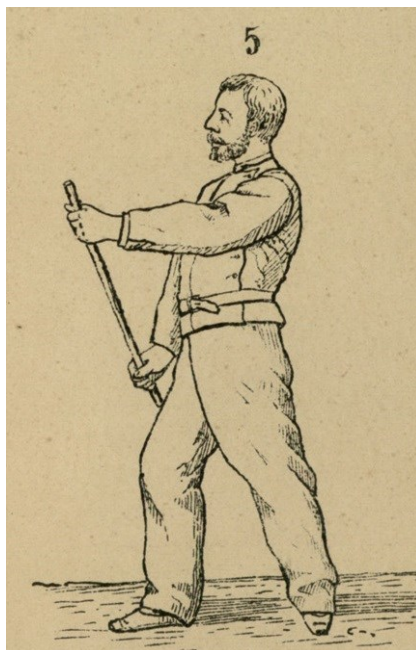


Plate 2. Figure 5.

Parry six defends the right leg to the outside, thus being similar to the third parry in the sabre. However, as with the cane in the lower blows it is not inconvenient for the leg to move to second so we do not think is very useful.



Plate 2. Figure 6.

Parry seven is similar to previous and to parry four in sabre, protecting the inside of the right leg.

[Missing]

Plate 2. Figure 7.

Only one of these two parries, either of them, is enough to receive and parry all the blows directed to the legs from right to left or from left to right. However, it is convenient to change the position of the hand in order to allow for an easier wrist flexion when feinting or throwing after a parry. We have said that opportunity, in fencing, is the goddess of victory, and therefore, its cult must be religiously observed; a missed chance, an unappreciated moment of time, a trembling momentum or a late resolution are always the cause of disgraces.

When using the cane in these parries, the hand that holds it must be very tight, and the arm will be slightly gathered to the body in order to quickly revolve it after the opponent's attack. Not stiffening but attacking with skill and a firm parry without stiff movements. That is the beauty in the game.

The gradual and progressive development of muscular strength is in direct relation with the organized work that is performed and this principle is so axiomatic that observing it will grant knowledge of its precision. We say this supported by experience, practical facts and the brilliant results obtained. It is necessary to train the strength and intelligence to direct it. Otherwise we will get nothing.

At a celebrated conference in Paris with Mr Doubartier and Mr Mosquera, gymnast teachers (the first one head of a company of acrobats and the second a notable acrobat, better prepared than the Greek Horbaris, great aerialist and creator of the balancing pole that took his name) we were able to show the truth of everything that has been said here.

Premature efforts destroy and do not create; nature, no matter how rich it is, can be ruined in a single moment. Thus effort must be gradual; advice that will be thanked even if just because of our good wishes, as the Italians say: *slow and steady wins the race*

## XVI. QUITES

In cane fencing, the quite is used to protect the body from a blow. It is different from the parries because, in this case, the blow is stopped going towards it. Much sight, opportunity and quickness are necessary for it to be played; it is necessary then to have special skills, characteristics that are difficult to acquire: it is true that hard work and application are very worth, but they will never reach the skills given by God: *What was not given by God, Salamanca cannot give*. However, do not despair of reaching the desired goal where everything is reduced to match the desired result as this is not our opinion.

But if, on the contrary he tries to hit us with a sword or sabre thrust, we must use the quite to avoid it, and we must attack him immediately without allowing him to recover. All of this needs to be observed, correctly practiced and, therefore, we give few or none importance to all treatises that have been or will be written.

There is no doubt that they illustrate and increase the interest and the enthusiasm, but it is not enough. It is necessary to have the presence and example of a master and a good provost to fence with and not to move from one exercise to the next without perfectly controlling the previous one. What has been presented here is the most decisive expression of truth, and it is only needed to see it to understand that this method does not need training using a baptism of fire to convince us of its truth.

## XV. FINISHERS AND THEIR DEFENCE

When fencing with the cane, the finishers can be formed with the blows and backhands due to the fact that the aggregation is impossible in this game. We present three finishers; one superior and two inferior. The first is at an obtuse angle and the second and third are at an acute angle.

Let's see first the superior finisher which takes place after the first parry, when the opponent has used a blow or backhand one. Supposing now that he tries to hit us with it, we protect the region with parry one, trying to deviate his weapon upwards; immediately, we will perform a thrust and will move the feet with a curve in the centre, allowing us proximity and the necessary attitude to achieve the finisher. Releasing the left hand, the right one will separate the opponent's cane over his outside. Then, and after achieving the outlined position over the left leg, the left hand catches the opponent's arm by the wrist and, with the cane in the right hand, we hit the opponent's chest, because if he is armed with a sabre he could hit us with very little effort sliding it in up to the inscription that says: *Made in Toledo*.

To perform the first inferior finisher the opponent must start with blow four, in which case we oppose with parry five and, moving the hands slightly forward, we make the opponent lower his cane to the left. Then we apply a



thrust four with feet to the centre and the left hand releases the weapon and catches the opponent's right hand by the wrist.

If we want to be precise concerning the second inferior finisher, the movements are similar to previous except that the opponent's cane is separated to the right and the legs describe a curve to the centre.

In defence against the finishers, the great question, the battle horse, is to disable the opponent. To reach this objective it is necessary that the opponent releases his left hand in order to try to catch our left hand. In this case, we will change the line to the right if we perform the superior finisher.

In the case of an inferior finisher the line change will be to the right or outside, if performing parry four or to the left, or inside, if performing the parry five. Considering that a change of line is not enough to counteract the action and false blow, we will try to use our cane to surpass the opponent's one, moving it upwards at the same time that our left hand, ready from the beginning, grabs the right hand of the opponent; then he will receive the same hit as he was planning to blow.

A fencer must combine his blows with mathematical precision in order to not be fooled by the opponent's dexterity; he must prepare his game and practice it always within the prescribed rules. We could write many pages talking about the theory of conclusions, mentioning the different combinations, but a scholar and intelligent fencer will see them when playing his game. Opportunity, quickness, sight and knowledge of the art will give us a result and never better than by actually using weapons will the following phrase be more appreciated: *Time is gold.*

## XVI. CONCLUSION

We have finished. Having been given the rules and having understood them by practising everything that has been mentioned and perfectly understanding the combinations of different games it is only needed to recommend faith and perseverance because these are necessary to fully appreciate the old proverb that says: *Zamora was not won in an hour.* United under the flag that represents these, maybe we have gone too far, there is still a long, difficult way to go and although Hope's platter, placed in the weighing scale of Destiny, touches the floor it is necessary to not sleep concerned with the idea of what will happen tomorrow. Labour thus, in the way indicated, as study is the fountain whose waters revive intelligence and perseverance is the piston that pushes us. Deny the dream that exhausts us in order not to say, as Dante: *I am Virgil and I lost Heaven for the sole reason of not knowing faith.*

END

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