

Manuel d'Escrime, 1887

Approved by the Ministry of War. Translated by Philip T. Crawley, 2015

Second Part- Cut Fencing

First article - Training method discussion. Spirit in which it must be practiced

The principles and spirit of the method of instruction are the same for sabre as for fencing with the sword. Refer, as a consequence, to the first article of the first section [see Appendix 1].

Article II- Description of sabre an the positions and movements which must be in your game for attack and defence

Nomenclature of the sabre

The sabre, the tool of counter-point, is composed of two principle parts: the blade and the hilt.

The blade comprises: the point, the back, the cutting edge, the heel and the tang inserted into the hilt.

The hilt comprises: the grip and the guard.

Method for holding the sabre

The grip in the right hand, nails underneath, thumb extended along the back of the sabre and touching against the guard, the four other fingers together, underneath and lightly gripping the grip; the cutting edge to the right, the heel to the outside and to the side of the wrist.

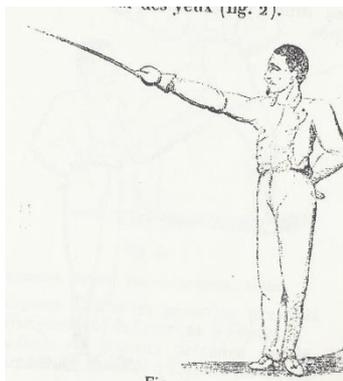
Preparatory Movements

While in position of a soldier without a weapon make a half-turn to the left while maintaining the head directly forward, the feet placed at right-angles, without separating the heels, the right arm extended to the fore and detached form the body, the point of the sabre about 0.1m form the ground, left forearm next to the body and bent to the rear (fig. 1).

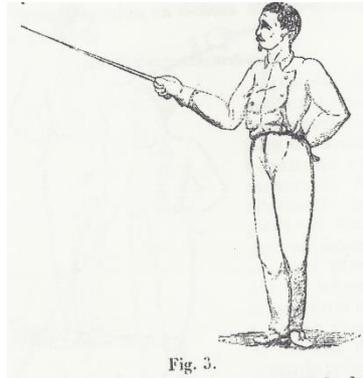


Guard

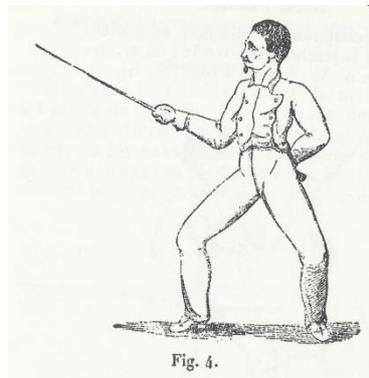
1. Raise the sabre, arm extended and hand at eye-height (fig.2).



2. Bend the wrist of the right arm, in a way that the hand is at temple-height and wrist at that of the right shoulder, nails under, elbow outside, to the right and a little detached from the body, point of the sabre at eye-height (fig.3).



3. Flex the legs and advance the right foot (fig.4) as in sword-fencing.



These are to precede the 2nd movements of both moulinets, the 1st to the left, of which the latter will be demonstrated.

Steps, appels, gather, lunge

These are performed after the principles prescribed in sword-fencing.

The lunge is always preceded with an extension of the arm made to aid the moulinet.

Slipping the leg

Cuts delivered to the leg or thigh are not parried with the sabre; but well slipped, that is to say by a lively carrying of the right leg to the rear about 0.35m, foot flat (fig.5).

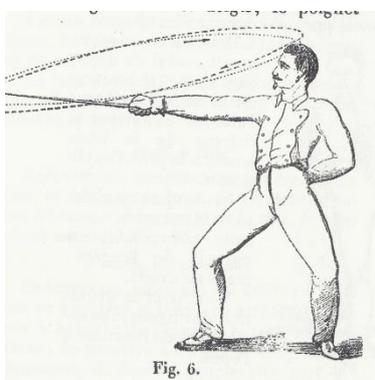


Cuts delivered directly to the head can be parried in the same manner, and while stopping the fore-arm, for increased safety, with a moulinet to the right, all while coming into a head parry.

Exercise to add suppleness to the arm and wrist

Moulinets

Extend the right arm to the fore, hand at shoulder-height, nails underneath; make the sabre describe, horizontally and over the head, a circle from left to right (or right to left) while slightly opening the fingers, the wrist aiding the movement and replace the hand with nails on top (or under), the cutting edge of the sabre to the left (or right), (fig.6).



Engagements and lines

Join blades, edge to edge, carrying the wrist to the right (or left); hand with nails underneath (or on top) to cover oneself.

Of the two engagements, that to the right (fig.7), by position of the hand and facilitating the attack and often defence in the low line, has the most use.

Cuts and parades are demonstrated in this instruction departing from the engagement to the right.

See, for the definition of the lines, instruction on sword-fencing [see Appendix 2]



Attacks

An attack can be made with a simple cut by a compound cut of no more than three actions.

Simple cuts are delivered:

With a moulinet, for cuts to the head and diagonal

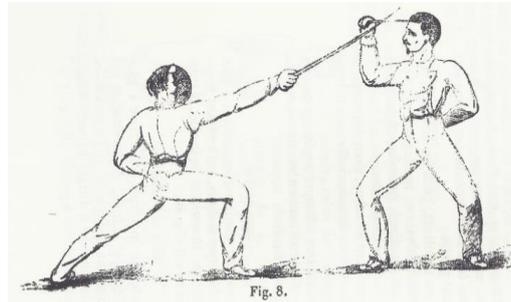
With a moulinet for cuts to the face to right and left

With a sabre-cut for cuts to the flank, stomach, sleeve (fore-arm) and thrust

The feint is made to make up compound attacks: they are done like the actual attack but without a lunge.

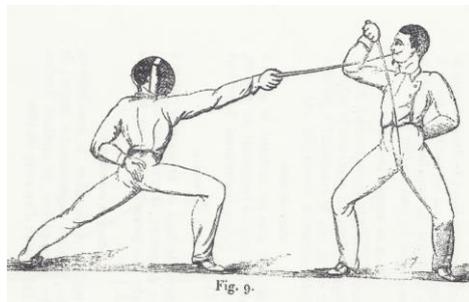
Head cut

Perform a moulinet to the rear and left and extend the arm, while stopping the sabre at the height of the top of the head, edge to the fore (fig. 8).



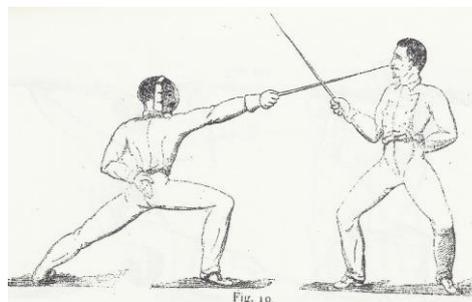
Diagonal cut

Perform a moulinet to the rear and left, extending the arm, while stopping the sabre at shoulder-height, edge to the fore, in such a way to direct the cut diagonally, from right to left (fig.9).



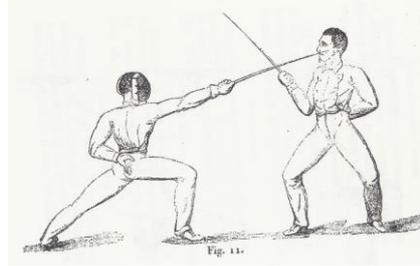
Face cut to the right

Perform a moulinet from right to left and extend the arm while stopping the sabre at face-height, edge to the right, hand with nails underneath (fig.10).

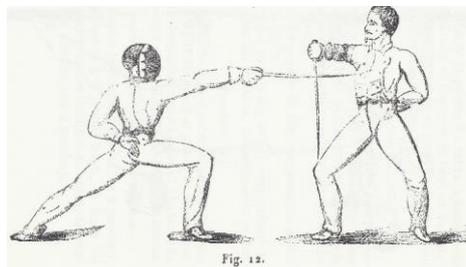


Face cut to the left

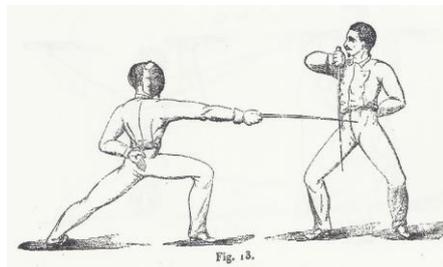
Perform a moulinet from left to right and extend the arm while stopping the sabre at face-height, edge to the left, hand with nails on top (fig. 11).

**Flank cut**

Extend the arm while stopping the sabre at flank-height, edge on top, hand with the thumb slightly to the left (fig. 12).

**Stomach cut**

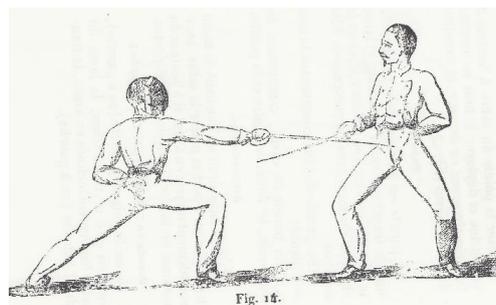
Extend the arm while stopping the sabre at stomach-height, edge on top, hand with the thumb slightly to the right (fig. 13).

**Sleeve cut**

Deliver a sabre-cut, edge underneath, thumb slightly to the right, in such a way as to interrupt, while stopping at the fore-arm, the execution of a head-cut.

Thrust

Lower the point of the sabre to chest-height and extend the arm while turning the hand, thumb underneath, edge on top (fig. 14).



Parade

The parade is always made by opposition of edge against edge and drop the sabre to the side to which it is presented, all while following with the body yet without accompanying it. They are divided thus:

1st The head parry, comprising the head and face

2nd The body parry, comprising the diagonal, flank, stomach and thrust

Head parry

Raise the right arm while turning the hand with nails to the fore and place the sabre a little horizontally and a little forward and at the height of the top of the head, edge on top.

Face parry to the right (or left)

Carry the wrist to the right (or left), about 0.1m from the temple, sabre blade slightly inclined to the fore, edge to the right (or left).

Diagonal parry or stomach

Raise the right arm, elbows outside, while bending the wrist, and place the forearm horizontally in front of the body at shoulder-height, hand with nails to the fore and toward the middle of the body; sabre point low, blade about 0.1m from the body, edge to the left.

Flank parry

Carry the grip outside and to the right, while slightly bending the wrist, elbow and hand at shoulder-height, blade about 0.33m from the body, edge to the right.

Thrust parry

While on guard, slightly incline the point towards the middle of the body.

Riposte

The riposte can be made in the same way as attacks.

They must be directed to the exposed side of the body, all while protecting the attacked side as much as possible; they are done in the following way:

Attack- riposte

Attack.	Head
Riposte.	Stomach or flank
Attack.	Face to the right
Riposte.	Face to the left or flank
Attack.	Face to the left
Riposte.	Face to the right or stomach
Attack.	Diagonal or stomach
Riposte.	Head or diagonal
Attack.	Flank
Riposte.	Head or face to the right, or stomach
Attack.	Thrust
Riposte.	Head or face to the right, or stomach

The same cuts can be delivered as counter-ripostes.

The riposte is performed while also turning, after a parry, the grip in place, without quitting the opposing sabre, to put anew the edge to the fore and double the sabre-cut in the following manner:

Attack-riposte

Attack.	Face to the left
Riposte.	Face to the right and diagonal
Attack.	Face to the right
Riposte.	Face to the left or flank
Attack.	Flank
Riposte.	Stomach or face to the right
Attack.	Diagonal
Riposte.	Flank and face to the left

These same cuts can be delivered as a counter-riposte

Article III- Training progression

Instruction is given in four lessons, each of three reprises:

1st lesson

1st reprise- preparatory movement and coming on guard

2nd reprise- moulinets with fixed foot

3rd reprise- moulinets while lunging

2nd lesson

1st reprise- attacks with simple cuts

2nd reprise- parries with a simple attack

3rd reprise- uniting the attack with the simple parry

3rd lesson

1st reprise- attacks with compound cuts

2nd reprise- parries after a simple attack, and simple ripostes

3rd reprise- parries after a simple attack and compound ripostes

4th lesson

1st reprise- diverse attacks

2nd reprise- parries after a compound attack and simple ripostes

3rd reprise- parries after a compound attack and compound ripostes

Article IV- General rules and observations

The general rules to be observed are the same as for sword-fencing. Refer to article IV of the first section [see Appendix 3].

Article V- Lessons details

1st lesson

1st reprise- Preparatory movements

1. (1. Come on guard in four action

(2. On guard

2. Withdraw forward (or backward)

3. Step (or retreat)

NOTE: execute the appels and the salute

2nd reprise- Moulinets fixed foot

1. (1. Moulinets to the right (or left) in position

(2. Commence

(3. Cease

2. Moulinets to the left (or right)

3. Moulinets to the left or right (or right and left)

3rd reprise- Moulinets while lunging

1. (Moulinet to the right (or left)

(2. Lunge

2. On guard

2. (Moulinet to the right (or left)

(slip

2nd lesson

1st reprise- Attacks by simple cuts

1. (1. Head-cut: lunge
 (2. On guard
2. Face cut to the left
3. Face cut to the right
- 4 Flank cut
5. Stomach cut
6. Diagonal cut
7. Thrust
8. (Sleeve cut
 (Slip

2nd reprise- Parries of simple cuts

1. (1. Head cut: parry
 (2. On guard
2. Face cut to the left
3. Face cut to the right
4. Flank cut
5. Stomach cut
6. Diagonal cut
7. Thrust

3rd reprise- Union of attack with simple parry

NOTE: the parry must be done while withdrawing

1. (1. Diagonal cut: lunge
 (2. Head: parry
1. (3. Thrust: lunge
 (4. On guard

 (1. Flank cut: lunge
 (2. Head: parry
2. <3. Stomach cut: lunge
 (4. Head: parry
 (5. Thrust: lunge
 (6. On guard

 (1. Head cut: lunge
 (2. Stomach: parry
3. <3. Diagonal cut: lunge
 (4. Head: parry
 (5. Thrust: lunge
 (6. On guard

 (1. Face cut to the left: lunge
 (2. Face cut to the right: parry
4. <3. Stomach: lunge
 (4. Diagonal: parry
 (5. Diagonal: parry
 (6. Head: parry
 (7. Thrust: lunge
 (8. On guard

- (1. Face cut to the right: parry
- (2. Flank: parry
- 5. <3. Head cut
- (4. Stomach: parry
- (5. Diagonal cut: lunge
- (6. Head: parry
- (7. Thrust: lunge
- (8. On guard

- (1. Head cut, sleeve cut: slip
- (2. Stomach cut: lunge
- 6. <3. Diagonal: lunge
- (4. Diagonal cut: parry
- (5. Head cut: parry
- (6. Flank cut: lunge
- (7. Head: parry
- (8. Thrust: lunge
- (9. On guard

3rd lesson

1st reprise- Attacks by compound cuts

- (1. thrust
- 1. <2. Lunge
- (3. On guard

NOTE: Repeat several times after each other the same exercise, letting yourself be touched each time. To finish parry and make thrusts. This rule is common to all exercises.

- 2. (1. Feint with a thrust
- (2. Head cut
- 3. (1. Feint with a thrust
- (2. Face cut to the right
- 4. (1. Feint with a thrust
- (2. Face cut to the left
- 5. (1. Feint with a thrust and face to the left
- (2. Stomach cut
- 6. (1. Feint with a thrust and face cut to the left
- (2. Face cut to the right
- 7. (1. Feint with a thrust and face cut to the right
- (2. Face cut to the left
- 8. (1. Feint with a thrust and face cut to the left
- (2. Flank cut
- 9. (1. Feint with a thrust and face cut to the right
- (2. Flank cut
- 10. (1. Feint with a thrust and head cut
- (2. Flank cut
- 11. (1. Feint with a thrust and head cut
- (2. Diagonal cut

2nd reprise- Simple parries after a simple cut and compound ripostes

- (1. Parry thrust
- 1. <2. Face cut to the right: riposte
- (3. On guard
- 2. (1. Parry head cut
- (2. Stomach cut: riposte
- 3. (1. Parry face cut to the right
- (2. Face cut to the left: riposte
- 4. (1. Parry face cut to the left

- (2. Face cut to the right: riposte
- 5. (1. Parry a stomach cut
- (2. Head cut: riposte
- 6. (1. Parry flank cut
- (2. Face cut to the right: riposte
- 1. Parry a diagonal cut
- 2. Head cut (or diagonal): riposte

3rd reprise- simple parries after a simple cut and compound ripostes

- 1. (1. Parry face cut to the left
- (2. Face blow to the right and stomach: riposte
- 2. (1. Parry flank cut
- (2. Stomach cut and face cut to the right: riposte
- 3. (1. Parry face cut to the right
- (2. Face cut to the left and flank: riposte
- 4. (1. Parry stomach cut
- (2. Flank cut and face cut to the left: riposte

4th lesson

1st reprise- diverse attacks

- 1. (1. Feint thrust over
- (2. Stomach cut
- 2. (1. Feint face cut to the right (over the point)
- (2. Stomach cut
- 3. (1. Upon a change of engagement: beat (while turning the hand)
- (2. Face cut to the right (while replacing the hand)
- 4. (1. Upon a head cut: sleeve cut with a moulinet
- (2. Sleeve cut with a moulinet
- 5. (1. Parry a thrust
- (2. Upon my head cut, thrust

2nd reprise- parries and simple ripostes after compound cuts

- 1. (1. Parry head cuts and thrust
- (2. Face cut to the right: riposte
- 2. (1. Parry thrust and head cut
- (2. Stomach cut: riposte
- 3. (1. Parry thrust and face cuts to the right
- (2. Face cut to the left: riposte
- 4. (1. Parry thrust and face cuts to the left
- (2. Face cut to the right: riposte
- 5. (1. Parry thrust above and stomach cut
- (2. Head cut: riposte
- 6. (1. Parry thrust, face cuts and flank to left or right
- (2. Face cut to the right: riposte
- 7. (1. Parry thrust, head cuts and diagonal cut
- (2. Head cut (or diagonal): riposte

3rd reprise- Compound parries and ripostes after simple cuts

- 1. (1. Parry thrusts and face cut to the right
- (2. Face cut to the left and flank: riposte
- 2. (1. Parry thrust and face to the left
- (2. Face cut to the right and stomach: riposte
- 3. (1. Parry thrust and face cut to the left (or right) and flank
- 4. (1. Parry thrust, head cut and diagonal cut
- (2. Flank cut and face cut to the left: riposte

Article VI- Salute and assault

Salute

The salute precedes the assault and is performed in the following way:

1. Execute a face cut to the right while lunging
2. Return to the 1st position of the guard
3. Come on guard
4. Gather forward, while crossing sabres
5. Execute two changes of guard
6. Slip to the rear
7. Two appels
8. Salute to right and left, and gather forward
9. Come on guard
10. Invite an attack with these words: "To your honour!" and let them touch, then respond "By obedience!" Lunge while delivering a flank cut (or thrust) and return to guard.
11. Salute to the right, while gathering to the rear
12. Salute in front of you

Assault

In application seek to make sabre cuts with movements close to the body in such a way as to remove the grip from the line as little as possible and to give the cut with lightness. After having touched retire the sabre to the rear quickly, carrying it in an oblique angle with regard to the edge, with a cutting action.

Rules to be observed during the assault

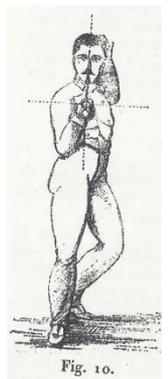
Refer to article IV of the 1st part [see appendix 4]

Appendix 1- First article - training method discussion. Spirit of teaching

- The sword must always be taught individually
- The aim is to teach the pupil to direct his sword in attack and defence
- The pupil must, in succession, learn;
 - a summary of the nomenclature of the sword
 - how to hold the sword
 - the preparatory movement for coming on guard
 - gathering forward and backward
 - stepping forward and backward
 - appels
 - extension of the arm
 - the thrust
 - reprise of the guard
 - diverse means of attack and defence in the order of progressive lessons
 - the wall
 - the salute
 - & the assault
- The instructor must adjust his manner, temperament and character appropriately to be in accordance with the make-up and intelligence of the pupil so that he can identify with him, so that he will develop step-by-step and so that he will come into his full ability; ceaselessly correcting his defects in hand and body before gradually increasing the rapidity of his movements in order to prepare them for the precision and speed which are essential qualities for a fencer, who must keep his individuality and yet gradually direct [these qualities] through effort and with maximum puissance until every element of an action is owned by him.
- The instructor must take care to portray in his practical demonstration the first principles, ensuring they are strictly observed, that the coming on guard, especially, is always correct and never goes outside the natural postures or movements of the pupil who will require no further rectification.
- Each detail taught must find its application in the assault; the instructor will thus connect how they are to be used by practical demonstration, wisely and repeatedly, accompanied with brief explanations, clear, neat and precise, allowing the pupil to understand fully the correlation between attacks and defences and arrive, later, at an intelligent and reasoned assault where he will regulate his game by following the exigencies given him by his adversary.

Appendix 2- Lines (see fig.10)

- Lines are zones or areas of space into which one can put the sword when departing from the guard position
- They are four in number
 - The right line or tierce or outside which is the zone or area to the right of the sword
 - The left line or quarte or inside, which is the zone or area to the left of the sword
 - The high line or prime which is the zone or area above the wrist
 - The low line or seconde which is the zone or area below the wrist
- The left and right lines are the only lines of engagement
- The high and low lines are the lines in which one fences
- The high line trumps the low line
- Never thrust in the low line (derobement) unless you have first closed the high line with a feint, a beat or a pressure in such a way as to not be stopped with a time-hit



Appendix 3- Article 4- general rules to observe

- 1st Perform these slowly at first so as to give them time to understand which attack is delivered. Add to these, later, to acquire speed, but with the sword not with their voice
- 2nd Follow each reprise in the left line first and then in the right line
- 3rd Precede each engagement with the command "Engage the sword"
- 4th Complete each exercise with a lunge performed on the command "Lunge" (or without a command, where the announcement of the last syllable of the attack to be delivered) and by a return to guard on the command "On guard" (or without command such that the delivered attack does not touch)
- 5th Finish each exercise with a straight thrust, while lunging after a parry, always made with provision for the exercise which follows
- 6th Rest during a break while making a gather; then take up the guard when the lesson is not ended
- 7th Finish the lesson with the command "1. Gather forward. 2. Salute to the fore."

Appendix 4- Rules to observe during the Assault

1. Do not thrust without having joined swords
2. Never push into the cut when one has touched and never accentuate it with cries in bad taste
3. Never riposte if the parry has disarmed the adversary, except in the case of a riposte tac-au-tac, that is to say a direct hit
4. Never ask if a delivered cut has touched: each time one has been touched declare it loyally by saying "Touché"
5. Do not talk while fencing: leave appreciation of and decisions on hits to the gallery
6. Do not complain about an adversary's game. If tired or unwilling take an honest pretext for finishing the assault