

Sabre Fencing on Horseback

By

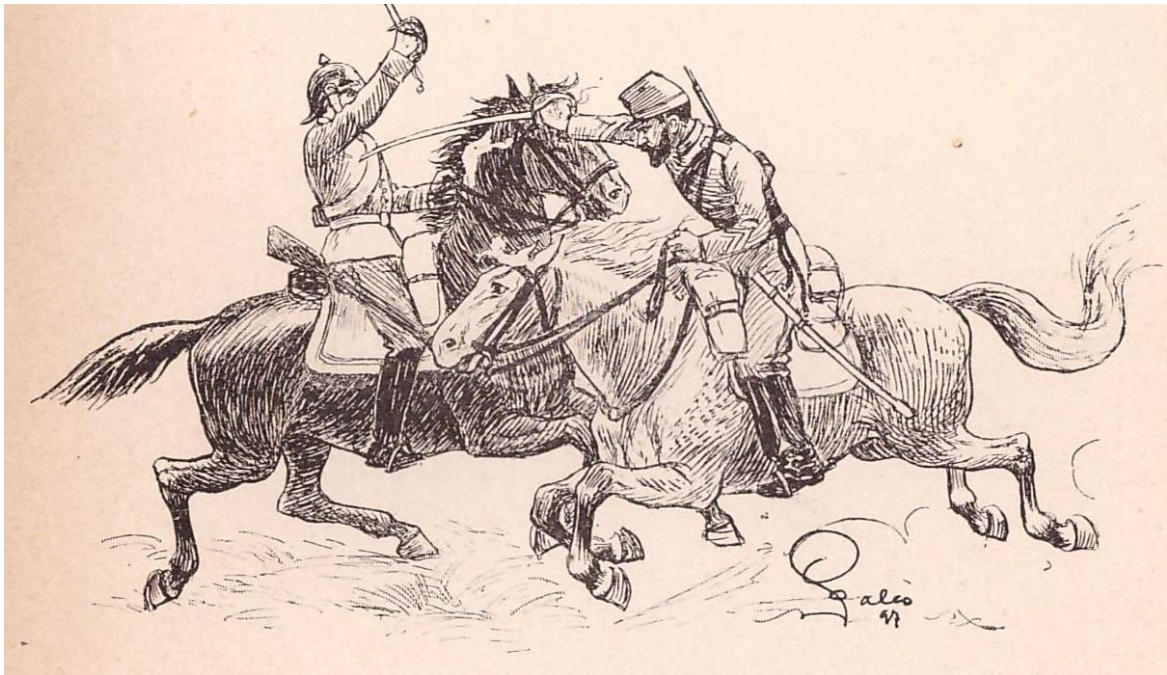
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and

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Author of "Game of the Sword" (in collaboration with Jacob) and the
"Manual of Fencing" (Foil-pee-sabre)

A work containing two chapters on the sabre opposing the lance and
bayonet.



Paris, Ernest Flammarion, Editor
26, Rude Racine, 26 (near the Odeon)

Translated from the French by Philip T. Crawley, 2015

Foreword

For the "Manual of fencing" which I published a year ago I consulted M. Alessandri on the subject of sabre and epee, which taught me equally a system both reasoned and practical.

When it concerns the sabre M. Alessandri had much study of this weapon in the period when he was with the African Chasseurs where it served as the sidearm either against the cavalry or against infantry during the war of 1870.

I thought it useful, by giving forth on the experience he had acquired, to write a method for sabre on horseback.

M. Alessandri and I wish that this publication will be welcomed by the army.

E.A.

Chapter I

The usefulness of sabre on horseback: Occasions where one encounters it further in modern war and apply this fencing- the necessary degree of understanding horsemanship in order to usefully wield a sabre on horseback

Even with the perfection of firearms there will always be in the coming wars, as in that of 1870, engagements between cavalry and cavalry or even cavalry against infantry.

These engagements take place in the presence of more or less numerous troops; but they are not just small combats between outriders, which are often inevitable combats, which are the most obvious examples but also the number of combatants who had to take charge in other lesser encounters.

For the study of sabre on horseback to give results it must naturally be that the men are fairly good riders who have their horses well in hand; even then it can be said that a good rider but a poor fencer has the advantage over a good fencer but a mediocre rider.

In an individual, isolated combat, an exceptional event, he need only ably direct his horse in rapid circles in such a way as to disorder his adversary; there is always an easy method for doing this, even when facing him; he must approach rapidly, deliver a sabre blow upon the horse's muzzle which will rear and, if not unseated, more or less make it impossible for the rider to effectively use his weapon.

But outside this type of exceptional combat, and as a general method, for all types of horseback combat a superiority of horsemanship assures a marked advantage than a superiority of fencing. But one must join a sufficient practical understanding of riding, a practical understanding of fencing and one will become stronger than if you had not developed them and it will come about, in a relatively short time, that you will have very appreciable results.

In addition a rider who knows his sabre has greater assurance, greater confidence in himself and a more military appearance.

Chapter II

Type of sabre which must be used by the cavalry: a weapon slightly curved, convenient at once for the thrust and cut.- Observations on the thrust and cut.

The sabre which must be used in the cavalry is a sabre slightly curved, a little less than that of the Chasseurs, with a grip a little longer and a guard protecting the hand and wrist a little more.

These are the reasons for my preference:

- 1st This form of sabre facilitates the penetration of cuts. For sizeable cuts a straight sabre has less penetration.
- 2nd While slightly curved the form of sabre which I recommend does not harm the thrust. The point is found, moreover, directly in line with the far end of the pommel.

It must not be a too accentuated curve, not only because this harms the thrust but because there is always a large part of the cutting edge which is not delivered when giving a blow (1).

The sabre blade of the chasseurs is a sufficient length.

The guard must be complete to protect further.

The grip must be a little longer and a little thinner so as to be a better weapon in the hand.

It is however more useful to be able to better wield the weapon, which is the manner of giving a blow, as it is the weight which gives penetration.

The sabre must be less inclined to the cut. As all preference is to the thrust with others when the occasion presents itself for use, all while saying "Never cut with the edge when you can strike with a thrust". It must also be added, as a consideration, that in most cases, in fencing on horseback, cutting attacks are always shown.

I insist, upon the occasion of this subject, in the following chapters but I shall speak on this now:

Without speaking of special cases where one has an adversary protected, for example, by a cuirass, against the principal attack of a thrust which thus makes particularly useful certain cuts, such as the face cut and wrist cut, one must make the following general observation:

(1) This objection is made: even with a little curved blade do men not try to strike with the cutting edge instead of striking with the point?

Response: with a little practice even men who have little disposition for fencing can accustom themselves to strike with the point however they must. Moreover, they come to this instinctively.

Even in individual combat it comes about that the first thrust misses and the distance diminishes, the position of the adversaries is too close to one another, or a little behind one another and this renders especially practical cutting blows,

During an affair with several adversaries: the use of cuts is again frequently useful. In order to make room and disorder their adversaries it becomes more necessary to vary attacks, to strike sometimes like an estoc and sometimes large.

In addition, either in individual combat or in a melee, it is very practical to cut at the horse, often at the head or even sometimes the rear shanks.

Recall that for cutting the curved sabre is very effective; when well presented it has great penetration.

Of course, while delivering cuts, one must expose oneself as little as possible. They can and must be delivered with prudence, and when they land, with a little drill and the practice of weapons, you can protect yourself sufficiently while delivering cutting blows as when striking with the point.

For the artwork (1) use is made of a chasseur's sabre

(1) The positions are drawn after sketches by Boisdon

Chapter III

Preparatory exercises for the salle d'armes

One must have, for horseback fencing, two types of preparatory exercise in the salle d'armes.

1st Study of common fencing in the salle d'armes

2nd Study, in the position called "rider on foot", as that which must be chosen in common fencing for applying to the horse.

All exercises must be made individually. The master of arms and provosts must be riders: it sometimes actually happens that a cavalry regiment is sent a master of arms who has served his time in the infantry.

There must be four provosts per troop (1).

In regimental salles one must use steel sabres and not wooden sabres.

Each rider must take, in the salle d'armes of his regiment, three lessons a week, lessons each of two parts.

The preparatory exercises of the salle d'armes are completed with exercise on horse. At the end of five or six months, if there are a sufficient number of instructors, each cavalier will then use his sabre with ability and with confidence in his weapon on horse.

Because, with a trooper's sabre, it is a weapon less refined than the foil there are fewer blows to learn: it's about delivering with precision and giving them well with a flexible hand and to possess sufficiently certain defences and ripostes.

In addition the men take generally a taste for exercise in the salle d'armes. Even the less capable arrive at a certain dexterity and take a confidence in their sabre.

First we concern ourselves with the preparatory exercises in the salle d'armes.

I have not insisted on exercises made up in part of ordinary fencing, where one takes the ordinary guard, that is to say while opposite (2).

After the previous exercises, one passes, as said, to a dozen series of preparatory exercises, while taking the position called "the rider on foot".

On guard they hold the sabre as shown in fig.1, taking care to turn the cutting edge a little on top so that the blade is not presented flat. When flat one has less force for resisted an impact.

(1) By choosing very capable men as provosts one will achieve all this, bit by bit, with three hours of work a day; formed into shape by the instructors giving a lesson sufficiently

(2) For this subject see "Manual on fencing", published by M. E. Andre



Fig. 1 The guard

On the matter of the thumb an un-practiced rider instinctively places his thumb with the other fingers.

A practiced rider, by holding the thumb on the back of the grip, better directs his attack, better feels the parry and also resists easily impacts than in any other position. However, for cuts this of less importance than for thrusts. In addition if you have too great an impact the thumb can tire with the commotion, in that case put it with the other fingers: but it is rare, however, to have to sustain successive shocks.

Before passing on to the second series of exercises the men are to frequent the salle d'armes three times a week for several months.

Second series of preparatory exercises

In the position called rider on foot the men face hold themselves facing, by placing the left hand as if holding the reins, while separating the legs and, as a general rule, while imitating on foot their seat in the saddle.

In the position of rider on foot the men must be exercised individually in the salle d'armes by the provosts, under the surveillance of the master of arms.

The instructors place themselves besides the men while taking, at first, equally the position of the rider on foot and they teach how to perform the blows, defences and ripostes which they must choose from common fencing to practice on horse.

A number of blows, especially those which are relatively complicated, are little practiced or even impossible on horse.

Furthermore one must consider that enemy riders are protected from a certain number of blows, either by their equipment or by the seat or tack (without speaking of special cases where one encounters, for example, cuirassiers).

The saddle and tack protect a large part of the low line against thrusts.

Headpieces protect against head blows.

Equipment protects against cutting blows to the body.

As a result:

1st That thrusts must aim for preference at the chest and, as a general rule, the bust and also, on occasion, the face, flank and back.

2nd That cuts are delivered, for preference, to the face, neck, arm and, furthermore, to the horse's head and, on occasion, in the melee, to the shanks from the rear.

Attacks

First we are concerned with attacks with the thrust.

The instructor practices the following cuts:

(Words between brackets are included into the order, once the rider is practiced in the actions)

Recall that in blows delivered with the hand in tierce the hand is further turned at the end of the blow, thumb underneath.

Riders on guard, and in the position of rider on foot, the instructor commands:

(Hand in tierce) Forward, right, thrust!

(In the cover art the French rider (an African chasseur) makes a "Forward, right thrust").

(Hand in tierce) Forward, left, thrust!

(Hand in quarte) Forward, left, thrust!

Then, to thrust close to the side:

(Hand in quarte) Right, thrust!

(Hand in tierce) Left, thrust!

To strike to the rear:

(Hand in quarte) To the rear, right, thrust!

For these various blows it is good to observe the position which is in the figures for my method.

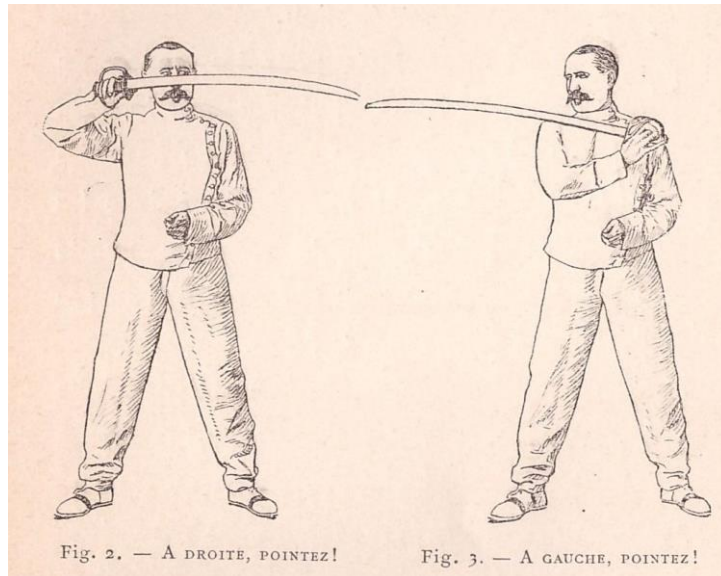


Fig. 2. — A DROITE, POINTEZ!

Fig. 3. — A GAUCHE, POINTEZ!

Fig. 2- Right, thrust! Fig. 3- Left, thrust!

For thrusts forward one has no need to chamber if one is walking because of the action of the horse, which give a great force to the penetration.

But for blows to the side if one delivers the hand less to the left or right, which is not shown in the figures, the thrust will not be chambered and will have less force.

Furthermore, if one objects that by carrying the arm to the left or right to chamber one is uncovered I respond that in real combat the action must be made at a certain distance and under certain conditions, in the case of melee especially, as I have specified.



Fig. 4. — EN ARRIÈRE,
A DROITE, POINTEZ !

Fig. 4- Rear right, thrust!

Of the other attacks already shown which are the other thrusting attacks to teach?

It is not even spoken of, in sabre fencing on horseback, of disengaging the line of tierce to that of quarte or the opposite.

To disengage, in the attack, you must have engaged, and have connected sabres and one cannot engage sabres in sabre on horseback.

Ordinarily adversaries deliver their attacks without making contact with the blade, except perhaps for an attack on the blade, a beat when one sees the occasion.

Supposing that one has engaged it will not be practical on horse to disengage the line from tierce to that of quarte or the opposite.

It will take too long due to the weight of the sabre; one does not deliver blows fairly quickly. One will be exposed, in the case of sufficient distance, to a cut to the forearm or, if there is a little distance between the two adversaries, make a double hit.

Even preceding the beat a disengage from the line of tierce to that of quarte or opposite will not be practical in sabre fencing on horseback for reasons I am going to show. As the blow cannot be delivered with speed as one will be exposed to a double hit or receive a wrist cut.

Disengages from the high line to the low line themselves are not practical, except in certain cases which I shall specify.

One must first remark that, to deliver a thrust in the low line by leaving the high line, otherwise called disengaging underneath, will often be impeded by the saddle and by the tack, unless the adversary holds his arm higher than in the ordinary guard.

Especially, while one disengages underneath, one is exposed, unless first having made a beat setting aside the sabre well, to receive a blow to the forearm or make a double blow, even if accentuating the turn of the hand at the completion of the blow delivered at a rider to one's right, as is often the case.

Conclusion: disengagements are not practical in fencing with the sabre on horseback, unless one can (1) precede them with beats having set the blade aside and if the adversary has sufficiently raised the arm so that one can push a well-directed arm above the saddle.

After a beat in the line of tierce one delivers the hand turned with the nails underneath.

Against a rider placed to the left one makes a beat of quarte disengaging underneath, while keeping the hand with nails on top.

But if this is to be used more frequently, after an attack to the blade, such as a beat, thrust in the same line, either in tierce or in quarte.

(1) First supposing that the gait of the horse gives one time

To perform these diverse blows, the instructor commands:

Beat tierce, thrust (same line)
Beat quarte, thrust (same line)
Beat tierce, thrust below
Beat quarte, thrust below

Now passing on to cuts which one will try to deliver equally in the position of rider on foot.

The instructor makes a good note of the method which one must deliver the cut, while drawing the cut and by withdrawing the arm back to you, Returning to a guard of tierce.



Fig. 5- Forward, right, sabre!

Words between brackets (hand in tierce) (hand in quarte) are assumed in the order when the riders are practiced in the movements.

The instructor orders:

“Forward, right, sabre!”
“Forward, left, sabre!”

(In both actions the hand is in a medium position).

The “forward sabre” must aim at the face (and the neck) or the arm, but not the head, unless the enemy rider’s head is not protected by a headpiece.

Other commands:

(Hand in tierce) “Right, sabre!”
(Hand in quarte) “Left sabre!” (1)
(Hand in tierce) “Rear, right, sabre!”

(1) All while withdrawing the weapon to you after having delivered the blow while turning the hand, nails under to retake a guard in tierce.

For these various blows, as for the thrust one must well observe the position that is in the figures for my method.

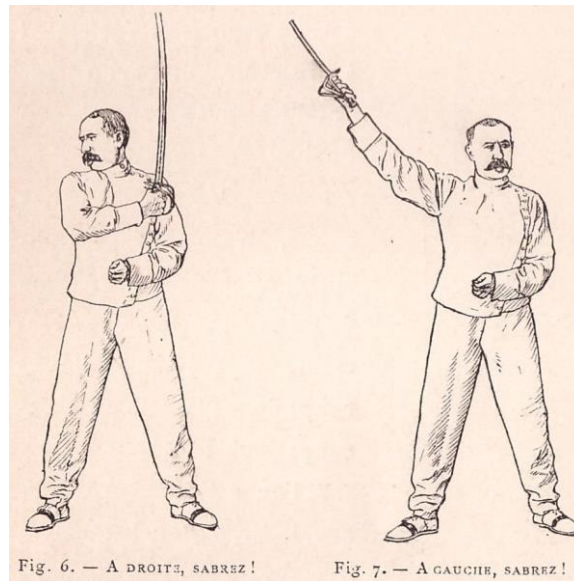


Fig. 6 Right, sabre!

Fig. 7 Left, sabre!

No more of disengages, I shall not speak on them, in fencing on horseback and for attacks by cutting while changing line and for the same reasons as before.



Fig. 8 Rear, right, sabre!

One is equally exposed to receiving a blow on the forearm or of making a double blow.

Even before a beat, cuts, by changing line from tierce to quarte or the opposite, will expose you to wrist blows or double blows.

If one has the opportunity to attack the blade, with a beat, it will be very practical to immediately perform a cut in the same line, to the face or neck, either directly or by turning the hand from tierce to quarte, or the opposite or to deliver a wrist cut.

The instructor will order, for example:

Beat in tierce, face cut right in tierce

Beat in tierce, face cut left (by turning the hand from tierce to quarte)

(Against a rider to your left) Beat in quarte, face cut in quarte

(Against a rider to your left) beat in quarte, face cut right by turning the hand from quarte to tierce

Such are the attacks to teach. I do not speak of attacks with a feint. And, indeed, I do not advise the use of feints on horseback, neither with point nor edge. They are not at all practical, in my opinion, and contrary to that which is taught in certain methods. Indeed one must all at once hold the full weight of the weapon used and the movements of the horse.

During the execution of a feint the adversary will thrust at you and notably deliver a wrist cut at you. Sometimes, if he sees an opportunity, he will thrust at the head of your horse.

In summary, it is not practical to feints on horseback with the point or edge, even with a single feint (1)

Moulinets

After the diverse attacks shown practice making moulinets.

Respond at first to the objection that, by making moulinets, riders will injure their own horses, and render them restive.

This is brought about by the poorly skilled.

Every soldier can arrive, at the end of a fairly short period of exercise on foot, to perform them on horseback without hitting the mount, which accustoms them very well to seeing the sabre passing alongside their head.

That said, I shall explain the utility of moulinets.

Furthermore, between riders armed with sabres, they serve in combats with one against two or several adversaries. They “have their place”.

Against a lancer the moulinet can be used at a certain distance by completing one as required as a defence to set aside the lance.

Against infantry it is moulinets or the actions of the moulinet which serve to defend against bayonet attacks.

(1) Do not confuse the feints with the actions from left to right or the opposite, on guard in tierce, arm bent, which I advise later. These are not feints, it is not the threat of a blow, it is a form of coming on guard, by holding oneself ready to defend or attack

If moulinets are useful, either as practice actions or as defences while fencing on horseback, it is not practical, in contrast, to attack with a moulinet or with a half-moulinet. It must be a closer game on horseback than in the salle d'armes, and for a stronger reason.

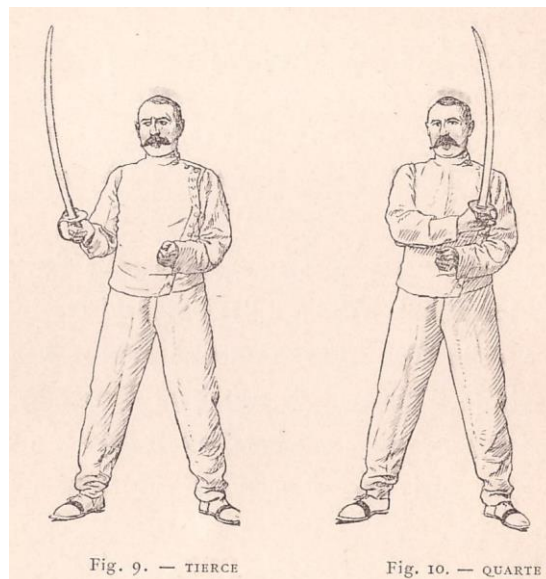


Fig. 9. — TIERCE

Fig. 10. — QUARTE

Defences

The parries in fencing on horseback between riders equally armed with sabres are:

Tierce

Quarte

High quarte

Prime

High prime

And sometimes seconde and septime

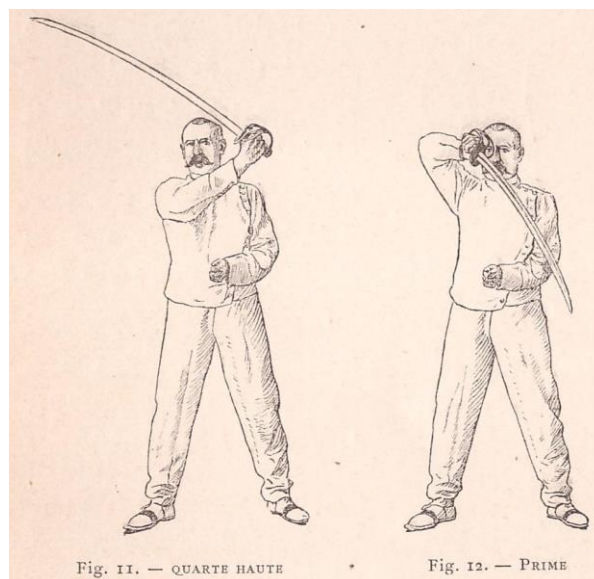


Fig. 11. — QUARTE HAUTE

Fig. 12. — PRIME

Fig. 11 High quarte

Fig. 12 Prime

The principal parries are tierce and quarte; tierce against a rider coming from the right, quarte against a rider coming from the left.

They parry thrusts directed at the chest and face and the principal cuts.

High prime and high quarte serve to parry, other than the head, the face and neck.

(High prime also serves to defend the horse's head in certain cases (1). But in combat it is generally preferable, however possible, to angle the head of the horse to the right or left.)

Prime serves to parry all of the left side. Much better, in general, to replace with quarte as this better allows a riposte.

Seconde and septime serve sometimes to the low line, for example, thrusts to the side. (While alongside, relative to the adversary, one does not have a flank protected by the saddle and tack against his thrust.)

For the execution of these defences see the "Manual of Fencing" which are cited in the adjoining figures (9, 10, 11, 12, 13).

Do not speak of counters with weapons as heavy as the issued weapons. They will be too long to parry and one loses the advantage in the riposte if one has time to defend, even with a counter-tierce. Recall that moulinets serve as defences in certain cases.

Ripostes

One must naturally choose, in fencing on horseback, the simplest attacks as ripostes.

After a parry of tierce

The ripostes to use are as follows:

Ripostes with a thrust

1st Direct riposte in tierce

2nd Riposte under, sometimes, in the case of the sufficient elevation of the adversary's arm. Keep the hand in tierce

Ripostes with a cut

1st Face or neck cut by turning the hand to quarte (1), without changing line;

2nd Face cut direct without changing line and keeping the hand in tierce;

3rd Wrist cut without changing line

4th Cut to the bridle hand

(1) To defend the horse's head with a high prime, since it is only the far end of the weapon which is found to oppose the enemy (even if one is standing in the stirrups) due to the distance of the sabre, the defender risks being hurt by a counter-attack to the head of his horse.

After a parry of quarte

Ripostes with a thrust

- 1st Riposte direct in quarte;
- 2nd Riposte under, especially in the case of sufficient elevation of the adversary's arm

Ripostes with a cut

- 1st Face or neck cut by turning the hand from quarte to tierce (2) without changing line;
- 2nd Face cut direct without changing line or turning the hand;
- 3rd Wrist cut, without changing line, in the case of sufficient elevation of the adversary's arm;
- 4th Blow to the bridle hand

After a parry of high quarte

Riposte with a thrust to chest

Wrist cut to the right arm, without changing line

After a parry of high prime

Riposte with a thrust to chest (This is the best riposte after this parry, but one may have occasion to riposte with a cut.)

Ripostes with a cut

- 1st With a strong pressure on the sabre riposte tierce to quarte with a face cut to the left;
- 2nd If one is very close to the adversary with a face cut to the inside, by changing line while cutting. If one is not very close one is exposed by changing line to riposte and will receive a blow from the adversary;
- 3rd With a wrist cut without changing line;
- 4th With a "right sabre" to the bridle hand.

After a parry of high prime to the horse's head (see the reservations made on this subject) riposte with a thrust or a cut.

After a parry of prime

Riposte with a thrust to chest

Riposte with a cut (to the left or right) to the face with a moulinet action.

Recall that it is better to parry quarte; this parry better facilitates ripostes with the thrust and cut.

(Recall that this parry is made against a rider who attacks from the right flank).

- (1) This action gives a very good penetrating attack
- (2) Same remark as the previous note

After a parry of seconde

Riposte with a thrust to chest

Ripostes with a cut

- 1st With a wrist cut;
- 2nd With a left cut to face;
- 3rd With a right cut to face.

After a parry of septime

(Recall that this parry is made against a rider who attacks to the left flank).

Riposte with a thrust to chest

Ripostes with a cut

- 1st With a face cut, left or right;
- 2nd With a wrist cut

After a rear moulinet form a parry riposte with a “right sabre” or a “left sabre” or a “rear sabre” or with thrusts, if one finds oneself in this equally rare situation.

Practice making the parries and ripostes shown by the common commands of ordinary fencing for sabre in the salle d’armes.

Other than the diverse ripostes to the adversary the instructor recalls that on occasion, after having parried, if one cannot reach the rider one strikes the horse.

General observations on ripostes with compound attacks and on counter-ripostes

In fencing on horseback one does not speak of compound attacks. One does not have time to do them; and, if one does have the time, one risks being stophit by the adversary.

All the same, it is not a question, in our practice, of counter-ripostes. The distances are too quickly covered from one place to another than can allow the phrase to continue.

It is entirely exceptional that a counter-riposte comes about between two riders. One must suppose them pressed together, having taken hold so as to strike exclusively at one another and maintaining their horses.

Chapter IV

Exercises on horseback

Riders familiar with both series of preparatory exercises in the salle d'armes will become very practiced following performing on horseback the actions of the second series, that is to say those that they made in the position of a rider on foot.

At first they must perform them individually, then simultaneously, under the direction of instructors.

Once shown the theory they then practice by directing attacks on a mannequin.

Head-to-head races also form a useful exercise.

Consistent exercise to deliver thrusts and cuts at clay cones to habituate oneself to giving penetration to blows and to make complete their delivery is equally to be practiced.

One can even hold assaults; simulations of combat on horseback on the condition of not striking the horses, especially on the head, which renders them vicious.

In the simulations of combat on horseback made among diverse regiments they agree between themselves, to prevent the riders striking the horses, that they will only use thrusts. There is less risk, in effect, with this system, of reaching the horse. But one can argue that this type of combat, without cuts offers too much convention.

In all cases it is a type of exercise which teaches men to direct their horses to approach an adversary to appreciate the distance from which to deliver certain attacks.

For these simulations of combat one must use gloves, masks and sabres with wooden blades.

Additionally a small number of exercises of this type will suffice to complete the instruction of the men.

Chapter V

Advice for real combat- Examination of different cases

One must distinguish between the two principal types of combat on horseback: line combat and individual combat.

One must have a game as simple as possible, especially for the former. As the instructor must observe, for line combat the tactic is particularly simple, and even, one can say clearly, for this type of combat, that in the final result, between skilled riders, there is a great part of chance, because there is little more than an exchange of blows, rapid and in passing.

While charging, the riders must silently intend to each take the enemy rider by passing on the right.

As for the difference that is often recommended for individual combat they must not, in line combat, attack the adversary's horse because it will then expose the remainder to the rear of their comrades.

That said act to pass rapidly, while guessing the enemy's movements, and of two opposing riders who extend their arms the first has the disadvantage: the other can parry the opposition and riposte for preference with the point (1) (except for a cuirassier, or with an adversary protected by a breastplate).

One must thus oneself not extend the arm, but mostly stay in guard and make small actions to right and left, arm bent, and holding the hand in tierce. It is better want to do small actions which keep the hand immobile. Recall that the edge of the sabre must, on guard, be held turned on top, so that the blade is not flat.

If, in the line charge, two riders arrive opposite one another with the same careful guard, both giving away nothing, what will result?

It can be that the distance is not sufficient to try a thrust, and both are wary of this. A cut follows a parry and a lively riposte with a cut equally parried, forming the single phrase of arms which they make on the pass, For example, a face cut parried with tierce, followed by a riposte to the face parried with prime. Regarding the counter-riposte, both riders are already out of reach, at least from each other, and enter an affray with other adversaries. Line combat is followed by individual combat in the melee.

Considering the line charge, I again make also the following observations:

After the actual rules in use in the line charge make the following actions:

1st rank, tierce, thrust! 2nd rank, forward, sabre!

(1) Recall that for a thrust forward one does not need to chamber to deliver the attack, the movement of the horse is enough.

Furthermore do not be afraid that it will stick, or the arm will be hampered by the body of the adversary which is hit; the injured party will turn and will disengage naturally.

By arriving in the position of “tierce, thrust!” this produces perhaps an imposing effect on the soldiers I trained: but also well indicates the attack which one wishes to make.

Upon this attack the beat forms a parry, following a thrust or a cut, as the need arises.

My advice, the 1st rank must be, I repeat, in the guard of tierce, but not have decided upon their attack or parry until they approach the adversary’s chest.

I always suppose that riders are well trained.

Considering the 2nd rank, with forward sabre, can be very useful following the resulting impact of the 1st rank. Everything will depend upon them producing this impact.

As for individual combat, for very good reason, one must not show the precise attack upon the adversary before it is delivered. The attack must be made by surprise, either to the horse or to the rider.

If one can make a beat to follow with a straight attack or thrust under in the circumstances shown, or to deliver a cut in the same line, a beat forming a parry makes a very practical blow.

Note that one must do this with the arm not completely extended, thus to parry better, it will be deceived.

Now, supposing in individual combat the two adversaries are both able: 1st protecting their horses and 2nd not letting their blade be read, waiting in guard of tierce for a mistake from their adversary.

It is thus an affair of great cunning to try to attack to parry and riposte, by benefitting from all his understanding of horsemanship (1) and bringing up his horse accordingly.

Between two good riders, who are on good, well-schooled horses and enough ground to turn who, furthermore, are practiced in fencing and have speed-of-eye, the combat can last for some time, if they are alone like two duellists.

But it will be an exception to see thus two riders isolated and at grips.

In reality riders do not have time as in a duel: these are more or less quick affairs against other riders who are in the melee.

(1) If two riders are alone, as in the simulations of combat that one sees in carousels, and if one of the two is much more able in horsemanship, or better seated, he can for example turn his adversary. But in such cases one can hardly do this in simulations of combat, where there are rules.

One must thus act with decision, but always bearing in mind the simple blows that I have shown, and as quickly as possible, even more so if one is not alone. It is no more than a combat in a closed field. And the actions of the horse help, one will be found quickly separated from the first adversary and in the presence of another, perhaps even several others.

Act to exchange without respite with each of those who you find in front of you or to the side with simple and rapid blows, while thrusting on occasion to the adversary's horse, or the horse of another enemy rider who comes into range. Get clear of an adversary whether injured or not - because after having struck and parried one another the adversaries are often separated - strike at another enemy rider, by benefiting from the opportunity that can be taken while they are at grips with a comrade.

The "forward" and "right" and "left thrust or sabre", the "forward thrust or sabre" have their special usefulness in the case of a melee.

If one has an affair against two adversaries one must naturally have more speed than ever, strike to the right and left as one can and rapidly and cuts are particularly useful in such a case for making room. After which use, however possible, thrusts. As a general rule, moreover, in the case of a melee follow your own inclination by doing whatever one can, but with great speed and wherewithal as you will be better practiced.

The danger of using certain attacks and the manner for benefiting if the adversary uses them

In the exercises will preceded I have not recommend the use of blows to the head, 1st because they will generally be impeded by headpieces, even if it is not a helmet, and 2nd because when executed it comes about that they are too exposing.

If an adversary wishes to deliver a head blow either without joining blades or after having joined in some fashion, one must thrust in tierce to the open chest, if distance allows, without bothering to parry; or better, deliver a wrist cut.

If ahead of the adversary one hits before the other hits and stops him. Furthermore by thrusting one is protected by the sabre guard by turning the hand well at the completion of the thrust in tierce, as I have shown (See the cover image).

If the adversary who delivers the head blow is protected by a cuirass or by a breastplate, deliver a wrist cut. It is more practical than to parry and riposte.

On the subject of disengagements in sabre fencing on horseback, I have already summarised some reservation it is important to have on their use, and that one is exposed by wanting to disengage from tierce to quarte or the opposite, or even by wanting to disengage under, except in certain specific conditions.

I have also shown the inconvenience of using feints on horseback.

If the adversary wishes to make a feint close-by stop him with a thrust or wrist cut, or a parry and riposte on his first feint after having met his blade, whatever is best as feints cannot be made fairly quickly with cavalry sabres.

Special cases- in front of you is a cuirassier or an adversary to the front with a chest protected by a breastplate impervious to penetration with thrusts as well as cuts

All the previously recommended blows except a thrust to the chest are to be used. In other words, use a thrust to the face and, if against an adversary who is not entirely protected, thrusts to the side and back; and, furthermore, cuts to the face (1), neck, right forearm and bridle hand.

Passing on the defensive

If the adversary, protected thus, delivers a thrust to the chest parry tierce (or quarte depending upon circumstances) and riposte with a thrust to the face or, for preference, because one risks less in the passing, with a cut to the face.

If he delivers a head cut one can wait, parry and riposte; but if, while aiming at the head, he presents his forearm to give sufficient delivery, it is much better, without waiting for his blow, to deliver a blow to his forearm.

The case of several riders who are surrounded by a number of riders equally armed with sabres

Riders who see that they are on the point of being surrounded place themselves at a certain distance from one another and turn the rear of their horses to the right and left and form a sort of circle.

They can then hold for a long time their adversaries in check, impede their advance by striking, as the occasion arises, at the horses of those who push into the circle.

(1) And to the head, if the adversary has a headpiece which protects him insufficiently; *a fortiori* if the head is bare.

Chapter VI

Sabre against lance

A rider well trained in sabre and having confidence in his weapon, gifted with composure can combat a lancer with advantage.

The lancer is, without doubt, favoured by the length of his weapon.

But it is a game with little variation; he only has a thrust to give and, if he misses, he has little chance of defending himself with blows with the shaft of the lance.

When the rider armed with a sabre makes contact with a lance he has the advantage of the situation. He will find himself to the side of the length of the weapon and out of his reach, while he himself, as the distance closes, with his relatively short weapon, finds himself in range to deliver either a thrust or a cut.

The difficulty for the sabreur (1) is, in summary, getting to make contact with the weapon of his adversary, who will naturally seek to avoid in order to deliver his thrust without engaging the sabre. By which parries will the sabreur avoid the lance, either to the right or left?

Note that he must however try to have his adversary to his right so that the lancer will then pass by his weak side. The left, with his long weapon, is almost as strong as his right.

To the right the sabreur sets aside the lance with parries of tierce and seconde- seconde if the lancer, coming from the side, attacks the flank; repeat as required these parries and riposte either with a thrust to the chest or with face or wrist cuts.

To the left the sabreur sets aside the lance with prime or again, better, with quarte and, in the low line, if the lancer, coming to attack the flank, with a septime.

Quarte and septime can be repeated on occasion.

After a parry of quarte, the sabreur has the same ripostes than those shown against another sabreur: riposte with a thrust or riposte with cut to face or wrist.

What's more, he can, against a lancer coming to the left side, make a moulinet followed by a parry of quarte, but much better is septime repeated as needed.

(1) The word "sabreur" is used here in the sense of a man armed with a sabre and not in the sense of a fencer only making cuts; the sense of this word is in perfect opposition to a "thruster".

In addition against a blow with the haft by the lancer, the sabreur must, either lean over the collar or parry or riposte. He leans over the collar especially in the presence of the movements called "Around, strike", an entirely fantastical action with the extremity of the lance; then, always in the presence of these actions, the sabreur must not hesitate to rear up his horse and try to reach the enemy with a leap. It is furthermore probable that in real combat the enemy can barely make these actions.

In other cases the sabreur must always advance carefully while trying with composure to set aside the lance.

But all while believing that a rider well-trained in wielding the sabre on horseback can take on with advantage the shock of a lancer in the conditions shown previously, I am partisan for the increase in number of lancers for the following reasons:

1st Because I am afraid that there is not always men sufficiently trained in the use of sabre on horseback;

2nd Because the "morale effect" of the lance is real and it is effective, especially against riders insufficiently trained in sabre; against these, furthermore, even outside the whole question of the "morale effect", the lancer will always have more chances to take the advantage.

If one comes to it the lance is simpler to wield than the sabre as it comprises less "fencing" and can be learned more quickly, one can conclude that it will be supported to see increased the number of lancers; but in what proportion? It is fairly difficult to be precise and, in all cases, it is not within the plan of this work.

In addition it is simply this: the cuirassiers, having already armour which has double the advantage of protecting them and has a morale effect, can be as easily dispensed of their lance as other bodies of cavalry, however they will make heavy charges.

Chapter VII

Sabre against the bayonet

Unfortunately the perfection of firearms one can suppose again, in modern war, outside even the case where munitions are exhausted, of encounters with sidearms, between riders armed with sabres and among infantrymen who are served by their bayonets.

Riders can only just attack directly infantry who do not have ammunition.

Against infantry ranged opposite and with fixed bayonets, the first riders armed with sabres who seek to break the lines care not for and cannot use fencing; they heroically made the sacrifice of their existence, and more or less, risk falls and serious wounds to break enemy lines or put them to flight, then make way for their comrades.

When infantrymen are not presented opposite in a tight line, either because they have been disordered or, caught by surprise, have not had the time to group into good order, riders armed with sabres are then able to make use of real fencing. But this is clearly not a complicated game which is shown to them and the actions which they make first are as follows:

Right, parry and thrust

Right, parry and sabre

Left, parry and thrust

Left, parry and sabre

It is a special method of parrying which a rider uses against a sabre. Here, for the rest, is the detail of these movements;

Right, parry and thrust: raise the sabre a little to the rear and right, back of the weapon to the front, then lower the sabre and raise it quickly while "gathering up" the bayonet with the back of the sabre, then thrust.

Right, parry and sabre: Same action as the first, end with the sabre in line to thrust.

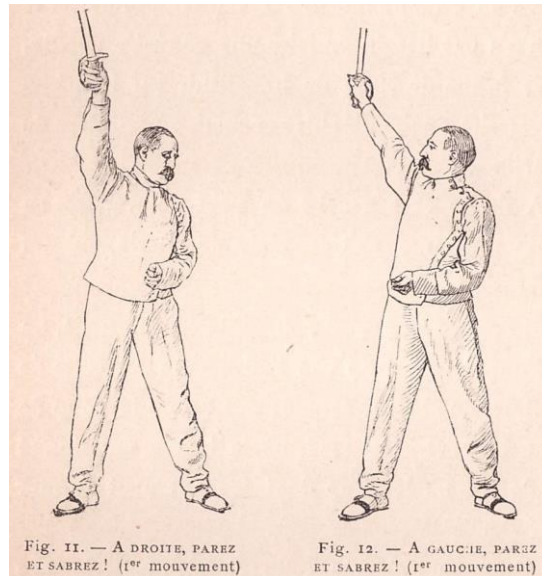


Fig. 11 Right, parry and sabre! (1st action)
 Fig. 12 Left, parry and sabre (1st action)

The final action by which one sabres can serve as needed as a new parry against the same adversary or against another enemy.

It is one of the reasons for which it can be preferable to sabre more than thrust. This will also depend on the position of the adversaries and the distance that you find them at when you aim, and also, of course, the speed of the horses.

If one is at a good distance for the thrust and if one does not need to make a new parry, under the form of a cut, upon the same adversary or another enemy, thrust for preference.

To the right or left one can thrust either with hand in tierce or with hand in quarte, depending upon the occasion.

If one is too close to thrust usefully, or you passed-by the adversary too quickly due to the speed of the horse, it is the case that a cut is shown, other than the cases mentioned above or where the cut forms a parry.

In addition that after the special parry which forms the “gathering” of the bayonet with the back of the sabre, the cut is a little faster than the thrust.

For “left, parry and thrust or sabre” raise the sabre to the front, back of the weapon to the front, then lower the sabre and raise it quickly to the rear while gathering the bayonet or bayonets with the back of the sabre, then thrust or sabre.

The same observations are made as before on the choice between thrusts and cuts.

Of course, in the occasion of a melee alternate between cuts, depending upon circumstance, following the inspiration of the moment; and complete

them one among others, by making “right (or left), parry, thrust and sabre” or “right (or left), parry, sabre and thrust”.

In addition that in the previous war there were curious examples of French riders armed with the sabre passing at the gallop to the side of German infantrymen who, crouching almost on the ground, sometimes sought to fire their rifle or sometimes strike with their bayonet; other than those who passed too close to the rifle barrels many riders were not hit, or not seriously, and they made serious wounds with the thrust or cuts, especially the thrust, on a fairly large number of their adversaries.

In finishing this study it remains to say that my taste for weapons which occupies me especially does not stop me from supporting the development of shooting practice in the cavalry, especially with the ideal carbines with which they are now equipped.

If they have many good shots in our cavalry regiments I will be less concerned with the morale effect of the German cavalry lance, or I will begin to attach, furthermore, less importance to his weapon, all while giving it more place than it has in our army.

When one attaches more or less importance to the use of the sabre one must understand that this weapon, which is furthermore is less encumbering than the lance, it seems that it must stay indefinitely the faithful companion of the rider.

There is hope that one better knows how to wield the weapon at their side, not only for the “morale effect”, but it must also be certain that it does not negate its importance in the military matters. A rider who knows how to wield a sabre has more assurance, more confidence in himself and more military appeal. And I have sought to show that an understanding of fencing with the sabre on horseback need not be complicated nor difficult to learn, especially if one considers fully the instinctive qualities of our soldiers from all eras.

