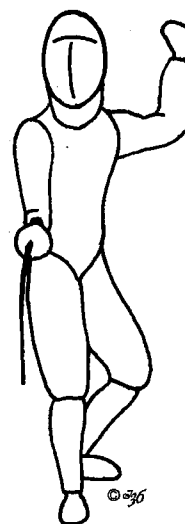
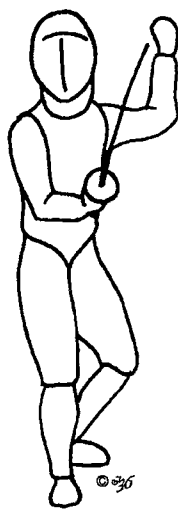
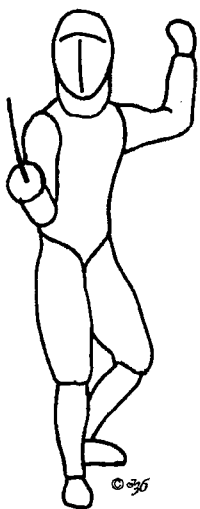


The Fencers' Workbook

I - FOIL



Acknowledgements

This manual was based on translations of "*Le Cahier des Escrimeurs*" by Maitre THIRIOUX, Technical Advisor, Trainer at the Ecole Interarmées des Sports at Fontainebleau, France.

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CHAPTER I

THE GRIP

*The correct execution of
all the movements a fencer can make is dependent on the correct grip on the weapon.*

I - DESCRIPTION

Hold the handle in the hand with the thumb lightly flexed close to the guard, the underside of the handle resting on the second phalange of the index finger (the manipulators) with the other fingers (the aids) joined and folded onto the handle ready to support the action of the first two or to assist them in blocking the opponent's action.

II - TECHNIQUE

Role of the Fingers

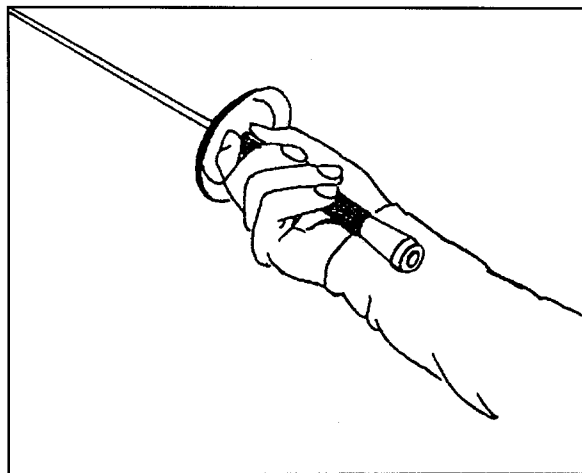
- 1) The thumb and index finger grip the weapon and direct the point in the different movements of attack and defence. Their primary role as controllers and movers requires their placement against the guard.

The other fingers reinforce the grip on the weapon while giving strength to the actions of the manipulators. They act by contracting and relaxing on the handle, *without ever leaving the handle.*

- 2) In the different movements of the arm, the handle must remain in the hollow of the hand to limit the movement of the wrist and the forearm.
- 3) The pommel of the weapon must remain parallel to the axis of the forearm to obtain a straight line from the point of the weapon to the elbow (sixte).
- 4) In the different fencing positions, the pommel may move from this position to ensure proper covering of each line.

III - FAULTS TO AVOID

Any other way of holding the weapon other than the above may cause the following:



- 1) *Index finger not gripping the handle sufficiently*
Results in a lack of power. The index finger extended along the handle increases the leverage required and, since the manipulators are no longer in opposition, the grip does not give effective resistance.
- 2) *Thumb extended along handle*
Prevents any contraction of the manipulators, crucial to any attacks on the blade. Interferes with tactical perception which depends on blade feeling and fingerwork.
- 3) *Little finger not pressing on handle*
Fault which is usually the result of poor positioning of the manipulators (handle resting on the first phalange of the index finger) and causes an important loss of strength due to the lack of a fifth support point.
- 4) *Thumb and index finger not against guard*
Increases the size of all movements of the point and reduces the authority and quality of defensive actions.
- 5) *Wrist flexes in the wrong direction*
The angle made by the weapon and the forearm interferes with proper covering of the line.

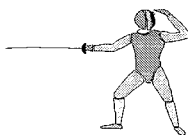
IV - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

At times the tactics in Epée allow the fencer using a french grip to vary the method of holding the weapon, however, this does not apply to Foil. The weight of the electric foil and the imbalance caused by the electric point interfere with actions requiring speed and finesse (deceptions and evasions etc...) and logically force the fencer to more frequently use moves with force. Some, perhaps due to laziness, find a source of strength in the use of orthopaedic grips, and correct the lack of balance by using a shorter blade (No 4).

V - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Master should pay particular attention to the

manner in which the student holds his weapon, and to the position which the pommel should take up in the different fencing positions. The Master should check the mounting of the blade if the student is experiencing difficulty in placing his little finger on the handle. The setting of the blade should not be the "easy" way out, as there are grave consequences when the tang is bent too far. First, one should require an effort on the part of the student. Certain exercises educate the hand, develop the grip and aid in the acquisition of the particular dexterity required of the different fingers. Do not neglect these during the lesson (see sections VIII & IX). Each time the Master deems it necessary, the student should work without a glove.



CHAPTER II

THE ON GUARD POSITION (FOIL)

I - DEFINITION

The on guard position is the only position that allows the fencer to be equally ready to attack or defend, it is therefore the fundamental position of fencing, the precise execution of all fencing movements depend on its correctness.

NOTE: Modern electric fencing also requires the fencer to be equally ready for the counter attack.

II - COMING ON GUARD

The ruling of 1908 gives the coming to guard in five or seven steps. These two methods of execution prepare the student for ensemble presentations and for the "Grand Salute".

A simple and quick teaching method permits the "placing" of the student from the very first lesson.

First Step

Place the feet at right angles, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet (using the fencer's foot) apart, heels on the same line.

Second Step

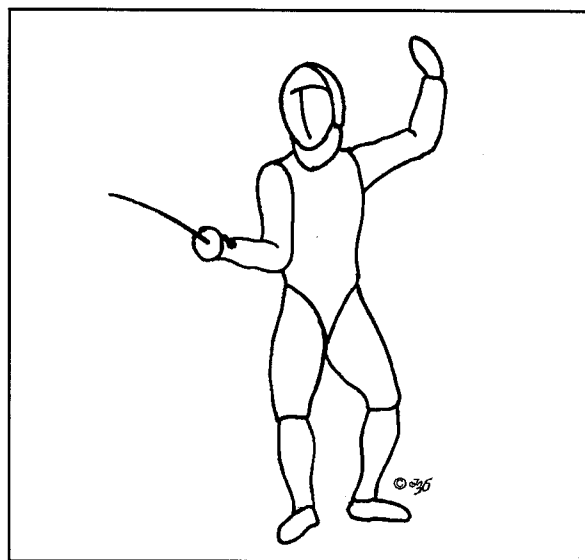
Bend both legs equally while spreading the knees, body remaining upright.

Third Step

Bend the right arm, elbow away from the body which is turned sideways, with forearm more or less horizontal, point at shoulder height. At the same time lift the rear arm backwards while bending it, elbow at shoulder height, hand slightly flexed without tension in the forearm, the whole rear arm forming a arc (3rd step C.F.1908).

NOTE:

The electric foil often causes the fencer to lower his point to avoid attacks on the blade and to prepare for an eventual counter attack. In this case the forearm is closer to horizontal.



The on guard position

III - TECHNIQUE

- 1) *The feet* should be strictly at right angles with both heels on the same line so as to obtain and maintain the largest possible equal base, without which he is not in perfect balance. The front foot along the line of axis between the fencers ensures that the footwork and the lunge are executed in a straight line and in the right direction.
- 2) *Flexing of the legs.* Attempt to obtain a regular pentagon formed by the line joining the heels, legs and thighs. The fencer's centre of gravity should be on the vertical line passing through the centre of the regular pentagon thus formed.

- 3) *Trunk* straight and turned sideways, shoulder relaxed (head facing opponent).
- 4) *The non-weapon arm.* The elbow of the arm should remain at shoulder height and the arm should be effaced.
- 5) *The weapon arm.* Hand in supination forming the extension to the forearm. Pommel held to the middle of the wrist.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

The classical on guard position can and should be varied according to the tactical requirements of the bout. The combined variations of arm and leg movements, et cetera, allow the fencer to prepare and execute his actions with maximum tactical effectiveness.

Gaining distance is actually a delicate problem. The flèche is useful as a means of attacking from a distance. For its instantaneous execution, it is advantageous to reduce both the distance between the feet and the flexing of the legs.

The centre of gravity is, however, always of primary importance for gaining and breaking ground and for the correct execution of the lunge and the flèche. The fencer will find his balance by judiciously shifting his centre of gravity forwards or backwards, *all the while keeping his body straight*, to avoid displacing the body weight.

The weapon arm does not escape tactical requirements, its position must also be modified according to circumstances. Facing a taller adversary, the fencer will need to increase his cover in the high line, by shortening his guard position and raising his forearm.

Facing a shorter adversary on the other hand, the fencer should extend his arm very slightly while lowering the forearm a little. This position causes additional difficulties for the opponent who must gauge the fencing measure and avoid the ever possible counter-attacks. The guard of octave often embarrasses opponents by forcing them to adopt an offensive movement to which they are not accustomed. The opponent's attacks on the blade can be made more difficult by lowering the point to the same level as the hand.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

- 1) *Stance too narrow*
Caused by the legs being too straight, the rear leg doesn't extend far enough in the lunge. This is often the position adopted by those who

frequently use the flèche.

- 2) *Exaggerated Stance*
The rear leg doesn't have enough play to allow a good extension, the lunge is therefore shortened.
- 3) *Excessive flexing of the legs*
This rare fault brings the front knee forward to the point where it interferes with the raising of the toe, required for advancing and lunging.
- 4) *Front foot turned in*
Movements and lunges are executed on an angle.
- 5) *Rear Foot:*
 - a) *Open:* decreases the principle pressure point and causes slipping at the moment of maximum push.
 - b) *Closed:* decreases stability of the guard and makes the opening out of the knee and effacing of the hips impossible.
 - c) *Note:* Having the toes of the rear foot pointing slightly inwards improves grip when extending the leg, this position allows the pressure to be spread all along the foot and reduces sideways slipping.
- 6) *Feet crossed*
Does not allow the proper flexing of the rear leg which causes the fencer to move "toe-heel". In offensive actions preceded by a step forwards, the push is made with the toe of the rear foot, the steps are at an angle, and there is generally poor distribution of weight on the legs.
- 7) *Knee turned in*
This is a fault normally caused by poor positioning of the feet, or by a lack of effort on the part of the student.

- 8) *Excessive weight on front leg*
Often caused by the fencer adopting a position leaning forwards. The rear leg is therefore not sufficiently bent and the lunge is always preceded by a rising, or a pendulum-like backwards motion.

- 9) *Excessive weight on back foot*
Fencer is "sitting" thus lunging requires exaggerated effort. The lunge has a vertical push and looks more like a jump. The hips are not effaced.
- 10) *Body not effaced enough*
Caused by poor effacing of the hips and rear arm, lunge becomes heavy and slow. This position causes defensive actions to be very large.
- 11) *Exaggerated effacing*
Uncommon fault which causes tension in shoulders and makes all positions incorrect.
- 12) *Rear Arm:*
 - a) Elbow higher than the shoulder, causes the body to lean forwards and provokes a vertical extension of the forearm during lunging.
 - b) Arm insufficiently effaced, interferes with the effacing of the body and forces the shoulders out of the correct axis during the lunge.
 - c) Other faults: elbow below shoulder, forearm falling on the arm or too open, all interfere with the overall harmony & effectiveness of the lunge.
- 13) *Weapon arm*
The elbow out, point in, leaves the line open and interferes with the defensive moves. The over-extended arm exposes the fencer to actions on the blade: too short and defensive actions become too large.
- 14) *Wrist bent* (Sideways or upwards)
Interferes with proper covering of the line and contracts muscles of the forearm. Defensive moves are often exaggerated and "whipped".

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

A fencer's on guard position gives information (to a certain degree) as to his capabilities, and therefore a general idea as to the tactics to use to defeat him. The classical guard is very rarely seen and is very difficult to maintain during a match. The Italians are often on-guard with their feet crossed, hips well effaced, which provides them with a very well effaced body and allows them to fence from an

offset position as compared to the usual line of fencing. This manner of fencing has some disadvantages and requires enormous suppleness.

Poor positioning of the rear arm is often caused by poor (or unorthodox) on guard positions, which could in due course lead to some deformation of the spine, from whence come those critiques of fencing calling it an "incomplete sport". A certain amount of concentrated development of muscle groups which are most often used will occur; however this is the same in any sport, and one must not neglect general training (Gym & Flexibility training).

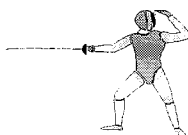
Fencing does not preclude working both hands, as good Masters well know. By doing the exercises from either side (right and left hand) improvement in the execution of movements can be achieved.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

"The on guard position must be adapted to the physique of the student which is the master's responsibility and to the bouting circumstances, which is the responsibility of the fencer"
(J.J.Renaud - *Theorie d'Escrime Moderne - Rouen, 1928*).

At every opportunity the Master should require the classical on guard position, but he should keep in mind the fencer's body shape and flexibility. Since the on guard position is an unnatural stance, it initially requires a sustained effort on the part of the student. The Master must be strict, correcting in a brief, precise manner *without interrupting the lesson*. He cannot hope to obtain a perfect position from the start, but the constant repetition of his corrections will show results, as long as he knows how to give each the importance it deserves.

The Master must teach the student to execute all actions starting from the following four positions: sixte, quarte, octave, septime, most commonly without blade contact, to teach the student to find the positions in space. The Master should have the pupil do exercises for general body flexibility, stretching, etc.... preceding the lesson. The time a teacher spends imparting a good guard position to students will never be wasted. Quite to the contrary, bad habits limit progress and certain fencing actions will be impossible to the fencer with those habits.



CHAPTER III

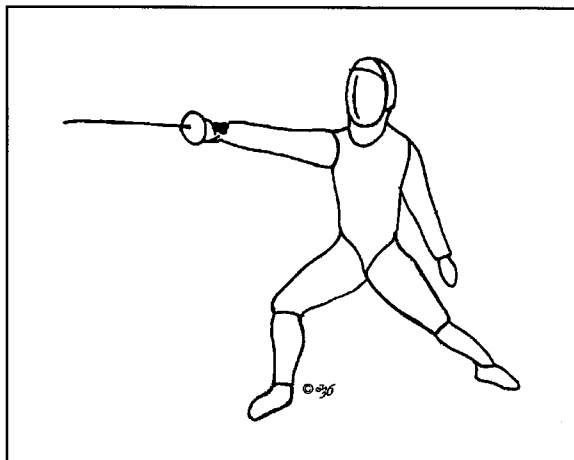
THE DEVELOPMENT

I - DEFINITION

The extension of the arm, followed by the lunge constitutes the development.

II - DESCRIPTION

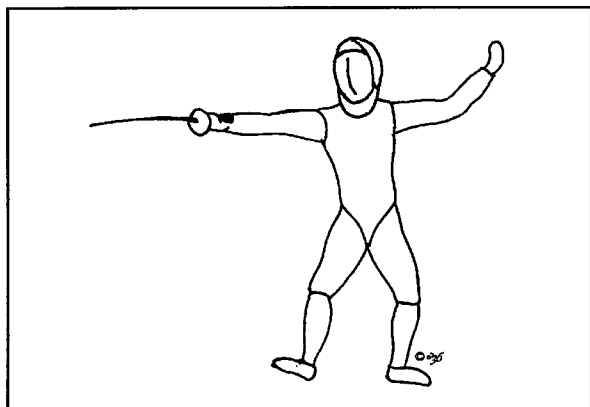
Starting from the on guard position, extend the right arm rapidly without tension, the body remaining immobile and the hand with the nails on top, at chin height. Bring the right foot forwards, grazing the ground, and rapidly extend the rear leg while simultaneously moving the rear arm downwards to a position more or less parallel, with the extended rear leg, hand open, fingers extended and together, thumb underneath. Place the right foot down, right knee on the vertical line passing through the middle of the foot, body leaning slightly forwards, right hand at eye height.



The Lunge

It is vitally important that:

- 1) The lunge be preceded by the extension of the arm and the necessary elevating and opposing movements of the hand.
- 2) The extension of the arm should be as supple and relaxed as possible while continuing to full extension - there should be no extraneous movement of the shoulder.
- 3) The left foot should remain rigorously flat .



The extension of the arm preceding the lunge

III - TECHNIQUE

1) *Extension of the weapon arm*

The extension must be complete and supple, the hand in supination, without exaggerated elevation or opposition that interferes with the length and precision of the attack. The point is *slightly* lower than the hand, shoulder *relaxed and lowered*. The perfection of this movement is defined by the straight line which the weapon, arm, shoulders and rear arm form.

2) *"Suspension" Time*

Three simultaneous actions make up the active phase of the development.

a) *Kicking front leg forwards*

The front foot should leave the ground by *first lifting the ball of the foot*, then projected forwards while remaining within the vertical plane defined by the on-guard position, with the heel grazing the floor.

b) *Extending rear leg*

The extension of the rear leg begins as soon as the front foot leaves the floor. The power of the movement only reaches maximum level when the hips, that have been carried forward by the movement, allow the force to be applied horizontally. The *complete and rapid* extension of the rear leg provides the development with its final acceleration.

c) *Extending rear arm*

The rear arm has two very important functions to fulfil - that of motor and balance.

i) *motor*

The rapid extension of the relaxed forearm towards the rear followed by the forward movement of the entire mass of the arm, adds power to the development. The arm follows a circular arc having the shoulder joint as centre point. The centrifugal force acquired by the speed of this movement acts on the point of leverage (shoulder) and accelerates the translation of the body forward (action/reaction).

ii) *balance*

At the end of its movement the arm is parallel to the rear leg and thus behaves as a stabiliser for the development. Under no circumstance should the arm *leave the vertical plane* of the body.

d) *Placing front foot on the ground*

The foot makes contact with the floor *heel first*, the lower leg should be vertical and the thigh horizontal, to achieve a good stop to the action.

NOTE: During the development the left foot must remain *rigourously flat*, it is the only point of contact with the floor during the suspension period. The correct blocking of the movement is also dependent on its position, and thus the *precise* appreciation of distance.

After the extension of the weapon arm, the weapon should be parallel to the floor. During the development and right through to the end of the movement it should remain in this position. Since the development causes the body to lower, the fencer should compensate by raising the arm and articulating the shoulder.

IV - TACTICS

At the final moment of the extension of the weapon arm, the front foot leaves the ground, the point is directed towards the target without any pause between the two actions and *always accelerating*. The coordination of the development is a function of the opponent's defensive reflexes, which are triggered by the movement of the leading foot.

It is therefore essential that the fencer gain the maximum distance by the extension of the arm prior to moving the foot. The correctness of the development must be maintained, but can be varied in distance according to the tactical intent of the fencer. In any attack the final position of the point is dependant on the target area one wishes to reach. The position of the centre of gravity of the fencer must allow him to lift the front foot without difficulty while leaving sufficient weight on the rear leg to obtain an instantaneous extension, similar to that of a spring kept slightly compressed and then released. The position of the body, leaning slightly forwards, allows the continuation of the conventional phrasing in case of the failure of the attack.

Some fencers with rudimentary technique, or who are disconcerted by the failure of their attack, attempt to hide the target area of the trunk, by bending the body over the front leg. This allows them to avoid the riposte and to execute remises or reprises. However, this should not be sanctioned by referees and should be taken as substitution of valid target area.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

The numerous faults dealt with for the on guard position have serious repercussions on the development. Here we review only the faults found in the execution of the development and the final static position:

A - In the execution of the development

1) *Pause between extension of arm and lunge*

This tends to "phone ahead" the hit and renders the fencer vulnerable to actions on the blade (attack on the preparation).

2) *Weapon arm not fully extended*

Interferes with accuracy and judgement of distance and sometimes allows the counter attack to gain a fencing time during the development.

- 3) *Weapon arm lowers with body*
Totally removes any accuracy and actions in the high line lack authority.
- 4) *Front foot leaves floor flat or by the heel*
In both cases the lunge "jumps" following the exaggerated elevation of the leg when the heel leaves the ground first. In this case the foot taking off occurs in two parts.
- 5) *Front foot lands flat or on the toe*
Doesn't allow the proper stopping of the action or the maintenance of balance in case of failure of the attack.
- 6) *Front foot launched as an extension of the thigh*
The lunge no longer grazes the ground, the foot lands too far forward and the knee is behind the vertical line passing through the middle of the foot.
- 7) *Rear foot doesn't stay flat*
Pressure point becomes insufficient and development lacks acceleration and balance.
- 8) *Rear foot slides*
Development takes place while letting the body lean forward at the moment of extension of the rear leg. Since there is no resistance at the pressure point, the push is practically nil. This fault does not allow correct judgement of distance.
- 9) *Rear foot opens out during the extension of the lunge*
The push takes place using the toes only and is therefore insufficient. The loss of the right angle between the feet leads to a lack of balance.
- 10) *Body not properly effaced*
Push no longer occurs in the vertical plane and is reduced. Development is heavy and acceleration is impossible.
- 11) *Bad use of the left arm*
The extension of the forearm above the horizontal, the flexing of the forearm prior to the extension of the lunge, and lowering of the arm before the extension of the forearm, are all faults which interfere with the speed, coordination, balance and harmony of the development.
The fencer who does not use his left arm has a natural tendency to over-use/abuse the flèche attack.

B - In the final position

- 1) *Weapon arm low*
Point higher than the hand, the weapon arm lowers with the body. The attack lacks length and precision. The blade bends the wrong way and risks breaking.
- 2) *The body leaning forward*
Incorrect execution of actions while on the lunge and interference with correct return to guard. This fault does not allow exact distance to be assessed, the fencer often leans on the target causing an exaggerated bend in the blade.
- 3) *The knee in front of the vertical line which passes through the centre of the foot*
The thigh is no longer horizontal and the position of the pelvis is too low making the return to guard very difficult and occasionally impossible. The development lacks stability.
- 4) *The knee behind the vertical line which passes through the centre of the front foot*
Insufficient development and the attack is lacking in length.
- 5) *The front foot turned in*
Also causes the turning in of the front knee and thus lack of balance. This fault, causing instability, affects the return to guard.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The execution of the development is linked to the independence of the fencer's muscles. Contraction of muscles anywhere in the body, other than those required for the action, will slow down the movement. Balance plays a critical part, and the fencer who finds himself having to re-establish his balance momentarily lost due to some fault, will contract his muscles and thus limit his actions.

Some students possess the natural talent which allows them to execute the development correctly and fairly quickly. Time spent during lessons "feeling" the movement is obviously a function of the fencer's body, musculature, fitness, nervous system and application.

Some Masters, rare today, teach the simultaneous extension of the rear arm and weapon arm. This action has the advantage of completely effacing the target. If taught too long, however, it interferes with the throwing action of the rear arm which must be completed in a single time to be effective. It is not uncommon to see students to whom this method has been taught, doing this while feinting or riposting. The elevating and opposing movements of the hand should not shorten the distance of the attack, and if poorly executed will hamper precision.

In the past students were taught Foil, which was considered a means of training for Epée. Today conventions give right of way to an attack executed correctly.

Electric Foil imposes a certain perpendicularity to the foil relative to the target due to the need to ensure that the end of the point slides into the barrel without any additional resistance. If the attack is developed while taking control of the blade, the elevating and opposing movements become indispensable. *The coordination and acceleration of the development must allow the fencer to touch the target before his front foot touches the ground.*

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

In the execution of the development, the extension of the arm and the lunge are often actions which the beginner executes simultaneously. The Master must therefore pay careful attention to ensure that the arm be *fully extended* prior to beginning the lunge. He must seek speed only when the two movements are perfectly executed.

In the extension of the arm towards the plastron, the student must direct the point directly to the target and touch when the arm is horizontal. The elevation of the arm is only executed in the final action to relax the muscles of the shoulder as a

follow through.

It is imperative that the Master require the position of the hand *in full supination* (without elevation of the shoulder). This action is difficult but it is the only way to avoid sideways oscillations of the point.

The projection of the front foot must be the focus of particular attention. The raising of the toes requires a level of automatic response which is acquired with training of the correct muscles. The Master can require that this movement and the extension of the arm be simultaneous.

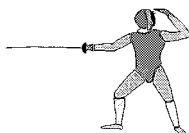
It is easy to become aware of the actions of the left arm when it leaves the vertical plane. The Master can cause the attack to land in thin air by displacing himself so as to control the pupil's position including the position of the left foot. The arrival of the point on the plastron provides information as to the final extension of the left leg.

The lunge to the plastron should only be of a few centimetres. Thus the student becomes used to his distance and senses the necessity to stop his development and keep the left foot flat on the ground without letting it slip.

The student should not push on the plastron as this fault will lead to difficulties if he is parried, as he will not be able to continue the fencing phrase. The Master must always be at the right distance and not provoke this fault himself.

The action of bringing the student to strike the target prior to his foot hitting the ground should not cause an exaggerated elevation of the foot so as to delay contact with the ground, *the heel must graze the floor.*

Repeating the development too rapidly prevents the student from thinking about his movements, so he must be given time to relax & concentrate on his moves. A brief comment made at the right time is of greater value than a lengthy discussion. At any time the Master can leave the student in the final position of the development to control, observe and make corrections.



CHAPTER IV

THE FLÈCHE

I - DEFINITION

The flèche consists of the extension of the arm followed by the complete loss of equilibrium of the body forwards.

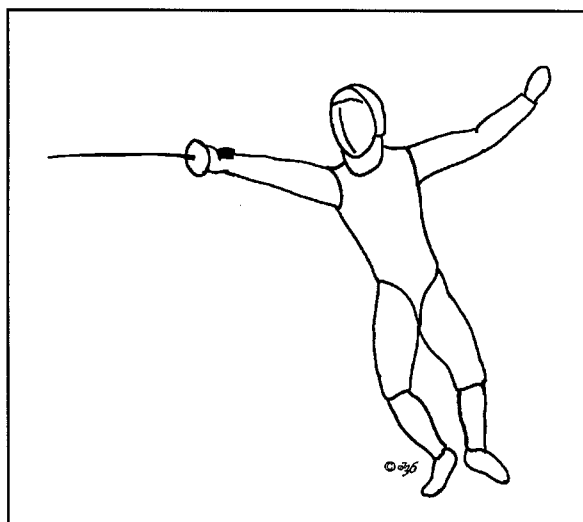
II - DESCRIPTION

To flèche from the on guard position, rapidly extend the arm without tension, with the hand supinated at shoulder height. Then bring the centre of gravity of the body forwards until the point of complete loss of equilibrium, with the body inclined and the front leg still bent. Rapidly extend the front leg and project the left arm backwards, the back foot leaving the ground and being placed in front of the front foot at the distance required to regain balance.

III - TECHNIQUE

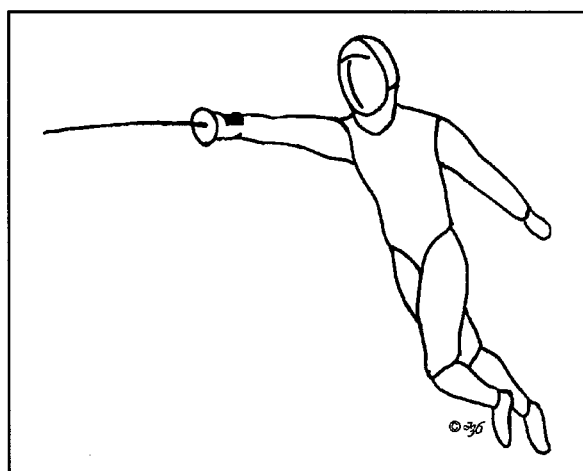
Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter III.

- 1) *Extension of the weapon arm*
- 2) *The loss of balance forwards*
The loss of equilibrium is achieved by a displacement of the hips, with the front leg bent, which induces the loss of balance. The body is inclined and turned completely sideways, along the line of the rear leg. The foot back lightly touches the ground as the weight of the body passes entirely onto the front leg whose foot is in a forced flexion.
- 3) *Extension of the front leg*
The extension of the front leg begins with the lifting of the heel. The push comes from the complete and rapid extension of the leg and foot. The body is turned entirely sideways and is projected forwards in the extended line of the front leg.
- 4) *Projection of the non-weapon arm*
The non-weapon arm acts as the motor and the balancer as in the development.



Loss of balance preceding the flèche

- 5) *The suspension*
At the end of the complete extension of the leg and foot the point touches the target. The front foot is no longer in contact with the ground, except for the toes. As the foot leaves the ground the back leg is brought quickly underneath the body to prepare for landing.



The flèche at the moment of the hit

6) *Positioning of the rear foot*

The rear foot lands on the ground at a distance from the front foot that re-establishes balance.

7) *Study of loss of equilibrium*

The perfect execution of the flèche depends on the control of the loss of equilibrium. Several procedures starting from different positions allow this to be achieved:

a) *From the on-guard position*

The weapon arm is extended.

i) From immobility (see section above).

ii) With successive rocking movements, increasing in amplitude until complete imbalance forward occurs.

iii) Advance the rear foot close to the front foot by bringing the weight of the body and the torso forwards, the leg bent, the shoulders turned sideways and the non-weapon arm horizontal.

iv) Bring the front foot close to the back foot and place the ball of the foot on the ground, while leaving the weight of the body forwards, the shoulders turned sideways and the non-weapon arm horizontal. This procedure can be used with a preparation consisting of moving the rear foot backwards, to accentuate the loss of balance.

b) *From the half-lunge - the arm extended*

Bring the weight of the body entirely onto the bent front leg, by slightly advancing the torso and completely extending the back foot.

c) *From the lunge - the arm extended*

i) Lift the weight bearing point formed by the front leg by replacing the ball of the foot very close to the rear foot in a manner that will bring the body in the extended line of the rear foot with the torso turned sideways. The non-weapon arm returns to the horizontal and is extended without tension so it can play the role of pendulum.

ii) Bring the rear foot very close to the front foot by bringing the weight of the

body onto the front leg, which stays bent, the torso slightly forwards and turned sideways, the non-weapon arm extended back at shoulder height.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

The flèche is a method of attack that allows one to hit an opponent at a large distance (step, lunge), with a speed similar to the development.

It is rarely employed in non-electric Foil, as it limits the fencing phrase if the attack fails, but is used more frequently in electric foil, as it allows for the possibility of continuing the offensive movement by remise or reprise. The flèche is preferably used for actions in the high line because it permits easier domination of the opponent's blade; the body lifting during its execution. Executed without warning, the flèche surprises the opponent who seeks security in distance, or who systematically retreats when attacked.

The flèche sometimes allows a fencer to remedy the problem of smaller height and reduces the risk of counter attack, especially in electric Foil. The flèche only conserves the element of surprise when it is used discerningly and with a variety of preparations.

If the offensive action executed by flèche fails, the position of the flèching fencer, his imbalance and the reduced distance between the two fencers does not leave many options in the face of a good defence. The movement past the opponent must vary (right or left), following the line in which one wants to hit. The correct side is always that which permits the opposition of the opponent's blade.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults of the weapon arm and rear arm discussed in the development remain valid for the execution of the flèche.

A - During loss of equilibrium phase

1) *Extension of the front leg and lifting the heel*

Provokes premature elevation of the body which removes all speed from the execution of the flèche.

2) *Insufficient loss of balance*

The push from the front leg is no longer sufficiently in an oblique direction, the flèche is jumpy and lacks length.

- 3) *Insufficient sideways effacement of the body*
Reduces the length of the flèche and leads to a "break" in the body. This is often the result of bad positioning of the rear arm.
- 4) *Front knee turned inwards*
Sends the flèche off axis, impeding precision and speed and makes the return to equilibrium difficult.

B - During the flèche itself

- 1) *Incomplete extension of the front leg and foot*
The front foot having left the ground too early. The flèche lacks length, speed and acceleration. It resembles a jump.
- 2) *The hit arrives during the time of suspension*
The hit no longer arrives with maximum speed.
- 3) *Early landing of the rear foot*
Caused by bad balance, the attack is started by running which results in limited speed and no element of surprise.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The flèche is a method of attack that has frequently been employed since the appearance of the electric apparatus. Human judgement often disadvantages the fencer who attacks by flèche, since during the flèche the opponent's target is momentarily hidden from the view of the judges who then have great difficulty following the consecutive attacking actions. Over the last few years the distance between the fencers has considerably increased, favouring the use of the flèche, as it is less susceptible to the counter attack than the attack with a step forward.

Although the flèche is an effective attack in appropriate situations it must not become the rule to attack an opponent who is at very long distance. It is not recommended in second intention actions that demand great stability. Certain fencers overuse the flèche as they find it an easy solution for

attacking and staying out of reach of the opponent if the attack fails. Used in this spirit, the flèche becomes a running attack which prevents the development of a correct fencing phrase and the fencer is vulnerable to being penalised for being outside the lateral limits or the piste.

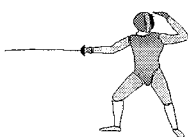
The fencer executing a flèche must be aware of his return to equilibrium so as to avoid a collision which could be dangerous. To systematically make contact with the opponent in order to stop the fencing phrase will be penalised by the referee.

VII- TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The flèche must not be taught too early, and the pupil must already possess good coordination. It is indispensable to prevent the beginner using it, as it is often executed by imitation without having been practiced during lessons. It is a method of attack that is natural and easy, but will impede the pupils progress if used too soon.

The Master must first teach the pupil the loss of balance forwards starting from the on-guard position. For this, he places himself at riposting distance and *retreats progressively* as he asks the pupil to hit by increasing his imbalance, while maintaining the front foot on the ground, the leg bent and the rear leg extended with the toes on the ground. When the pupil has found his position of loss of equilibrium forwards, the Master progressively increases the distance and obliges the pupil to develop the flèche by a complete extension of the front leg and foot. Instinctively the beginner must consider re-establishing his balance, but the premature displacement of the rear leg causes a rotation of the torso which impedes the precision and the length of the action. The Master must ask the pupil to *hold back the displacement* of the rear leg to the front. The rear foot should land slightly out of line according to whether the pupil is to pass the Master to the right or to the left.

As the pupil progresses, the Master can teach the fleche from the different positions of loss of balance described in paragraph III.



CHAPTER V

THE RETURN TO GUARD

I - DEFINITION

The action of returning to the on guard position forwards or backwards is called the return to guard.

II - DESCRIPTION

To return to guard: rapidly bend the rear leg, lift the rear arm and bring the weight of the body onto the rear leg replacing the front foot in its first position. The front foot grazing the ground while progressively bending the weapon arm, keeping the point well in line to cover the return to guard. The return to guard can, in exceptional cases, be performed forwards by bringing the left foot to the desired distance from the right foot, which does not move.

III - TECHNIQUE

A - Return to guard backwards

First part

The perfect execution of the first part of the return to guard depends on the speed, balance and harmony in the return to the on guard position as it is defined in paragraph two of chapter II. The rear leg, which is extended in the development, *rapidly bends* at the same time that the torso rises and that the hips move backwards, thus taking the weight off the front leg.

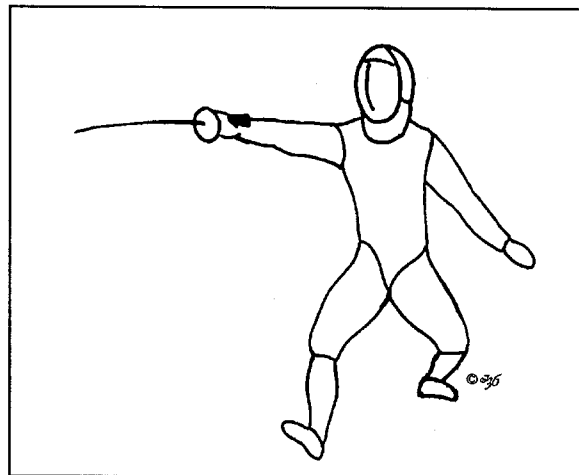
Simultaneously, the ball of the front foot is lifted, *the leg remaining bent*. This movement must be executed without lifting the hips and the rear knee moving along a horizontal plane.

Second part:

The body is now in a position that allows propulsion from the ground through the front heel. The front leg stays bent and its action is reinforced by *a pulling* backwards of the hips and the non-weapon arm.

Third part

The front foot is repositioned rapidly at the correct distance from the rear foot, without



The first part of the return to guard

exaggerated lifting and *through the heel* in order to avoid a prolonged period of suspension. The weight of the body is spread over the two legs, which allows consecutive actions to take place. At the same time, the weapon arm takes up its on-guard position.

B - Return to guard forwards

This movement is executed in one fencing time. The bent rear leg is brought up and placed under the body at its distance from the front foot, the knee well turned out and the foot flexed. The torso returns to a vertical position, the non-weapon arm comes up with the weapon arm remaining extended.

C - Return to guard by jump backwards

This movement allows the fencer to rapidly place himself out of distance.

First part

Is executed as for the first part of the return to guard backwards.

Second part

The extension of the front leg is performed with greater force as the lifting movement of the hips and non-weapon arm occur. Simultaneously a slight flexing of the rear leg allows the rear foot to lift off the ground with the legs remaining bent during the suspension. The feet are placed in their on guard position, the body vertical, in a way that allows for perfect balance at the moment the feet land on the ground. The extension of the front leg must be fast and controlled, in a way that avoids an exaggerated lifting movement, with the rear foot remaining flexed. At the same time the weapon arm returns to its position.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

If it is correctly executed, with a minimum of effort, the return to guard allows the fencer to immediately adapt to the tactical necessities of the bout.

If this occurs, it can have the effect of:

- 1) Causing the failure of the opponent's delayed actions, as the fencer is out of distance.
- 2) Facilitating defensive actions against the opponent's actions executed while advancing.
- 3) Recommencing an attack on an opponent who has simply avoided the previous attack.
- 4) Positioning oneself within or out of distance of the opponent, according to the tactical necessities of the bout.

The return to guard forwards: has the aim of allowing immediate recommencing of the attack in the following two cases:

- 1) The opponent has moved out of distance to avoid the attack.
- 2) The defensive actions employed by the opponent who, having moved out of distance, has not followed up with an offensive action.

The return to guard by backwards jump: offers the advantage of being able to move out of distance very rapidly in one fencing time, to a distance equal to the return to guard followed by a step back.

The first part of the return to guard can be used for executing counter-ripostes with second intention.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

- 1) *Leaning the torso forwards*
The weight of the body stays over the front leg, the return to guard is heavy and jumpy, the fencer repositions the front foot on the ground by the ball of the foot.
- 2) *The hips in the line extending from the back leg*
Is linked to the position of the torso and has the same consequence; it destabilises the return to guard.
- 3) *Lifting the heel of the front foot while pushing back*
Leads to the extension of the front leg, the body lifts, the push is no longer horizontal and the return to guard is jumpy and without balance, the legs lack flexion.
- 4) *The straightening of the front leg during the first part*
Provokes lifting of the body and a lack of flexion brings the weight of the body onto the rear leg.
- 5) *The inside of the rear foot touching the ground*
This fault often occurs at the moment of the flexion of the rear leg, the return to guard lacks stability.
- 6) *The rear knee turned inwards*
Leads to a rotation of the hips and torso, the weight of the body is on the rear leg, the fencer is "sitting".
- 7) *Insufficient use of the non-weapon arm*
When the rear arm remains bent and there is no pull of the arm backwards, the fencer leans the torso forwards and the shoulders are not turned sideways. The arm moves out of the vertical plane of the rest of the body and destabilises the return to guard.
- 8) *Lateral movement during the lifting of the non-weapon arm*
Destroys balance and provokes a rotation of the torso and hips (action/reaction).
- 9) *The front knee turned inwards*
Leads to a bad position of the front foot and makes the return to guard unstable.

- 10) *Re-positioning the front foot by the ball of the foot in the on-guard position*
Prevents any immediate forward displacement as the weight of the body is on the front leg.
- 11) *Premature shortening of the weapon-arm*
The fencer is exposed to offensive actions on the return to guard and defensive actions become difficult.
- 12) *Delayed shortening of the weapon arm*
Facilitates the opponent's offensive action eg. attack by taking the blade.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

When executed *immediately* after the development, the return to guard demands considerable muscular effort. The slightest fault destroys the balance and harmony, and increases the difficulty of its execution.

A correct development facilitates an immediate return to guard: the aim is to return to a perfect position that allows the fencer to perform the various movements appropriate at that moment in the bout.

Some fencers overuse the *flèche* through lack of confidence in offensive actions that can be executed with the development. More numerous are those who use the *flèche* to avoid having to return to guard knowing that they are vulnerable during its execution.

The utilisation of the first part of the return to guard for executing counter ripostes with second intention demands good balance, and also an exact appreciation of the length of the opponent's riposte, as well as great speed of execution in order to move out of distance. This procedure must not be used too frequently as it rapidly leads to the use of the riposte with step forward, or with *flèche*.

Although it is recommended to "block" the development, some fencers let the hips descend below the horizontal line passing through the front knee and thigh, and execute a "rebound time" which helps them to return to guard backwards. This technique demands much suppleness in the hips, but does not increase the speed of the return to guard. It is used by fencers who lunge as far as possible.

The fencer must bend the weapon arm progressively in order to avoid a direct offensive action on the return to guard, but he must be equally prepared to protect the blade from actions on the blade that are very frequently employed in electric

Foil due to the security that they offer. The withdrawal of the weapon arm must not systematically return the hand to the position occupied before the development. The hand must be able to go *directly* to the defensive position demanded by the offensive action executed on the return to guard.

VII- TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The difficulty in executing the return to guard is often increased by faults at the end of the development. The Master must therefore correct these before the return to guard. The first part of the return to guard merits special attention. Its correct execution is vital for conserving balance, for obtaining sufficient push, and for achieving a good, flexed on guard position.

The beginner often has considerable difficulty coordinating the flexion of the rear leg and the push of the front leg, which causes him to place the front foot back on the ground by the ball of the foot, the torso leaning forward. In this case, the Master can sometimes ask the pupil to return to guard without placing the front foot on the ground, and request that the pupil remain momentarily balanced on the rear leg, which is bent as much as possible. This procedure has the advantage of obliging the pupil to use the non-weapon arm, of lifting the torso, and of becoming more aware of balance.

The Master must initially ask the pupil to stay in the lunge during the lesson. The master must not retake the blade too early, nor look for the immediate return to guard before having obtained the complete lunge. Excess speed makes the pupil more concerned about the return to guard than about the lunge, which is no longer executed with the back leg straight and foot flat.

Many Masters only attach secondary importance to the non-weapon arm, however it is one of the essential factors in the return to guard. Its role is vital both as a motor and balancer. The Master must ask that its action be rapid, in the vertical plane (defined in the development) and finishing in a perfect position.

The beginner has a tendency to retract the weapon arm at the same time that he begins the return to guard. To correct this fault, the Master must oblige the pupil to return to guard with the arm extended and demand the flexion of the arm at the end of the return to guard.

The Master should change the line on retaking the blade so that the pupil covers in the desired line.

CHAPTER VI

DISTANCE - FOOTWORK

This subject is discussed for Foil, Epée and Sabre, and the few specifics relative to the different weapons are discussed in the paragraph "General Considerations".

I - DEFINITION

The distance of a fencer is the maximum length of his development.

To be in distance consists of positioning oneself so that the opponent can be reached by a lunge.

To be out of distance consists of positioning oneself out of reach of an opponent's attack.

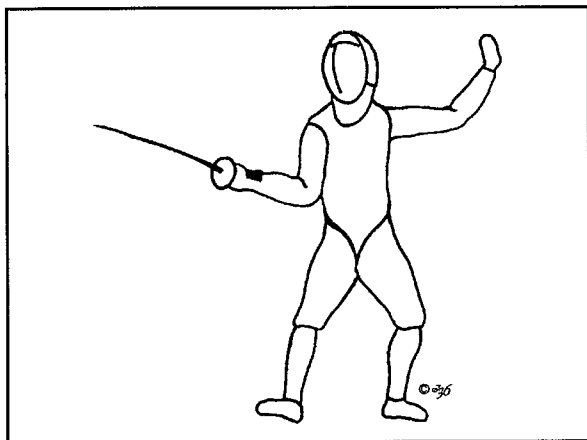
II - TECHNIQUE

Different methods of footwork allow a fencer to move closer to, or further away from, the opponent.

A - Displacements forward

a) Step forward - First method

From the on guard position, lift the ball of the front foot and move it the desired distance forward, keeping the heel close to the ground. Then immediately bring the rear leg forward keeping it bent and take up the on guard position again, with legs bent and body upright.



The first part of the step

b) Step forward - Second method

From the on guard position, advance the rear leg the desired distance, keeping it bent and the foot close to the ground. Immediately bring the front foot forward by lifting the ball of the foot, keeping the heel close to the ground and take up the on guard position again, with legs bent and body upright.

c) The jump forward

Lift the ball of the front foot and project the foot forwards. At the same time straighten the rear leg in order to advance the body forwards. Keep both feet close to the ground and then simultaneously reposition both feet flat on the ground at the desired distance, in the on-guard position, legs bent and body upright.

B - Backward movements

a) Step backwards - First method

From the on guard position, move the rear foot backwards the desired distance, keeping it flexed with the foot close to the ground. Immediately bring the front foot backwards, keeping the heel close to the ground and return to the on-guard position with both legs bent and body upright.

b) Step backwards - Second method

From on guard position, move the front foot backwards the desired distance, by lifting the ball of the foot and keeping the heel close to the ground, then move the flexed rear foot backwards and come on guard again with legs bent and body upright.

c) *The jump backwards*

Lift the bent rear leg, straighten the front leg in order to move the body backwards, keeping the feet close to the ground. Both feet land on the ground simultaneously in the on guard position, at the required distance with legs bent and body upright.

III - TACTICAL STUDY

The bout requires frequent displacements of varying size. The displacements are governed by the distance (maximum length of the development) of the attacking fencer, and to that of the opponent in defence. They are employed tactically according to the intention of the fencer.

The step forward - first method is a natural movement that is used very frequently, and which permits the fencer to maintain perfect balance, and to control the movement of the rear foot in the execution of feints, takings of the blade as well as in offensive actions with second intention. It enables the fencer to use all forms of attack and defence.

The step forward - second method offers the advantage of not being immediately visible to the opponent. The second part of this step (displacement of the front foot) can be suppressed. The development executed immediately after the displacement of the rear foot permits the fencer to gain time and to surprise the opponent, who believes he is still out of distance. This method is also used in the preparation of the flèche, as it facilitates the loss of equilibrium necessary for its execution.

The jump forward: its execution permits the simultaneous displacement of both feet, thereby gaining a fencing time compared to the first method of stepping forward while achieving the same displacement. When the attack is preceded by a beat, it is recommended to deflect the opponent's blade which will increase the sudden-ness and strength of the attack. The jump unsettles the opponent and decreases his assurance in defence, however, it must not be followed by an attack that is too complex. In fact, it often provokes a counter attack, and can be used judiciously in attacks with second intention.

The retreat - first method is the most common method of moving out of distance. It is naturally combined with defensive actions and adds extra security. Minimising the time taken to move the

front foot offers the possibility of executing ripostes instantaneously with a development. The loss of balance preceding the flèche can be obtained by placing the sole of the front foot near the rear foot.

The retreat - second method is more difficult to execute. It is used in certain circumstances, principally in Epée, as it allows the fencer to immediately withdraw the front foot from the opponent's offensive action, without hindering the counter attack. In Sabre, it is commonly used to obtain the loss of balance preceding the flèche by eliminating the displacement of the rear foot. The retreat of the front foot sometimes gives the opponent the illusion of a complete step back and encourages him to move forward too early. In this case it offers the possibility of executing an attack by flèche at the moment when the opponent moves his front foot.

The jump backwards is executed in one time, and permits the fencer to place himself immediately out of distance. It is recommended when the fencer is in doubt as to the nature of the opponent's offensive, when he is confused, or even when, in Sabre, for example, his hand is "taken up" in the opponent's feints.

IV - FAULTS TO AVOID

- 1) *Displacement of the front foot by lifting the heel*
This fault is sometimes caused by an excess of weight on the front leg, but more often comes from a lack of concentration or training. The fencer exaggeratedly lifts the foot, the step is staccato and the development which follows is generally jumpy.
- 2) *Displacement of the rear foot with insufficient flexion*
The landing of the foot occurs ball-heel, causing a loss of time and stability.
- 3) *Angulated displacements*
Are caused by a rotation of the hips and, more importantly, from bad positioning of the knees during displacements.
- 4) *Displacements executed by dragging the feet*
Result from a lack of suppleness and balance.
- 5) *Displacements executed with exaggerated lifting of the feet*

Are generally too large, either foot suspended too long.

- 6) *Legs insufficiently bent during displacements*
Hampers the quick execution of the development after the displacement and indicates an insufficient width between the feet or a lack of application.
- 7) *Raising or lowering the body during displacements*
Results from a lack of technique or concentration; subsequent developments lack spontaneity.
- 8) *Forward and backward rocking movements of the torso during displacements*
Lack of initial stability, one or other leg practically entirely supporting the weight of the body.

V - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The distance separating the two fencers during a bout rarely coincides exactly with the maximum length of the development of either fencer. Displacements precede nearly all offensive and defensive actions, whether it be for placing oneself at the length of the development, or for giving more security to the parry. In either case, it is necessary to have an exact notion of distance in order to give a maximum of efficiency to all actions.

Moving close to the opponent gives him the opportunity to attack or counter attack, which are always difficult to parry when they are well executed. This is why certain fencers, in particular short fencers, prefer to use the *flèche*. Being an offensive action covering a large distance, the *flèche* is prepared with displacements (forward or backward), but they have a particular character. These displacements are executed with the aim of achieving complete forward loss of equilibrium, the fencer reducing the distance between the feet, and placing the front foot on the ground by the ball of the foot (see Chapter V - "The *Flèche*").

The bout imposes the need for a continual succession of displacements. The tactics employed for combating the opponent's game require a lot of concentration and are linked to distance, which must be obtained *instinctively*. Appreciation of distance must become natural, and is the result of work during the lessons, and its exactness depends on the displacements and development. The

displacements *must be small*, about a shoe length, in order to avoid a lengthy time of suspension of either foot, during which the fencer is the most vulnerable.

To be able to instantaneously adapt to the bout circumstances, the fencer must maintain his balance whilst moving in the most supple manner possible, and placing the centre of gravity forwards or backwards, without rocking the torso to free either leg. It is indispensable to vary the rhythm of the displacements, more particularly in the step forward, in order that it is not perceptible or threatening. The *displacement* of the front foot is done slowly, without noise and the rear leg is rapidly brought up (still bent) to its distance. All other methods often startle the opponent, and provoke an immediate, instinctive retreat, offering him the possibility of executing an offensive or counter offensive action.

The jump forward is sometimes used by fencers who lack spring. They find in this movement a method of rapid forward motion and they precede the development with a slight "spring" time which helps them to obtain the necessary speed.

Hungarian fencers employ a special forward displacement for preparing the offensive with second intention by *flèche*. The displacement of the front foot is immediately followed by a small jump on the foot, forwards, executed on the ball of the foot. It permits the fencer to achieve loss of equilibrium at the same time as the parry of the opponent's counter offensive action occurs, the rear foot remaining in suspension.

The "*Balestra*" is also a mode of displacement formed from the step and bound practised by Italian and Hungarian sabreurs. It begins by a displacement of the front foot as in the step, the rear foot regains its delay and is placed on the ground practically at the same time as the front foot hits the ground. This displacement is closely linked with the lunge, the departure of the front foot in the development occurs at the instant that the rear foot re-lands totally on the ground. This procedure tends to accelerate the lunge, like a compressed spring releasing.

The execution of certain fencing actions necessitates the utilisation of different footwork techniques. These allow the target to be more easily reached when executing attacks with angulation or esquives (sidestepping and rotating the body to make the opponent's attack miss). These particular displacements will be dealt with in the relevant chapters.

Displacements by pass-forward and pass-backward are only taught in modern fencing as a way of developing suppleness in the first educative lessons. They consist of (starting in the on guard position) bringing the rear foot in front of the front foot in the pass-forward and, similarly, moving the front foot behind the rear foot in the pass-backward. In both cases the second foot is brought by the same method to its proper on-guard distance from the first foot. The forward or backward passes are not recommended in bouts; the crossing of the feet during this movement causes instability which can easily be used profitably by an opponent who attacks during this instant.

VI- TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

As modern fencing demands great mobility, it is important that the Fencing Master gets the pupil used to the different displacements. From the beginner's first lesson, it is indispensable to make him move very often, as prolonged immobility contracts the muscles and impedes the good execution of the different actions.

Even starting from a correct on guard position, it is difficult for a beginner to conserve perfect balance after a step forward or back. Practice and judicious corrections by the Master will make the pupil move naturally while maintaining a correct position.

During the lesson, the Master must vary, as often as possible, the distance that separates him from the pupil. He must position himself out of distance and watch the amplitude of the pupil's displacements, in order to obtain a maximum development with a slight curvature of the blade.

As soon as possible the Master must combine his displacements and those of the pupil, asking the pupil to position himself out of distance after

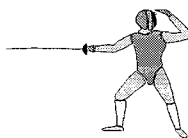
an offensive action, follow him when he retreats, step forwards when the pupil retreats, etc. Instinctively the pupil learns the habit of maintaining correct distance, and quickly acquires the ease which permits him to control his balance.

Progressively the Master will make him execute all the actions (offensive, defensive) and combine them with the step forward or back (for example, attack with step forward, parry with a step back, riposte with step forward, with lunge or flèche). This method allows an easy transition to training lessons and bouting.

The speed of execution of offensive actions, and the effectiveness of the defence depends on correct displacements. The varying rhythm in offensive and defensive actions with displacements necessitates perfect execution, stability and balance which will only be obtained if the Master demands that the pupil move *while keeping the heel of the front foot close to the ground, the ball of the foot slightly lifted, the rear foot flexed*. All other methods increase the duration of the displacements, create staccato movements and impede the coordination and harmony of the actions.

When the Master trains a short fencer, he must not forget that all the actions of this fencer are *of necessity* combined with displacements and should attach a great importance to footwork.

In general, it is recommended that all fencers prepare for the lesson with several warm up exercises, without a weapon; the arm supple and in the on guard position practicing successive displacements (step forward - retreat - bound) interspersed with lunges. In using the muscular warm up, the fencer seeks balance while placing his centre of gravity forward or backwards after a step forward or back, or a bound, etc. This exercise leads to the acquisition of suppleness, speed and the sense of balance, all of which are indispensable during a fencing lesson.



CHAPTER VII

THE LINES

I - DEFINITION

The name "line" is given to each position into which a fencer can move his arm relative to the body

II - OBJECTIVE

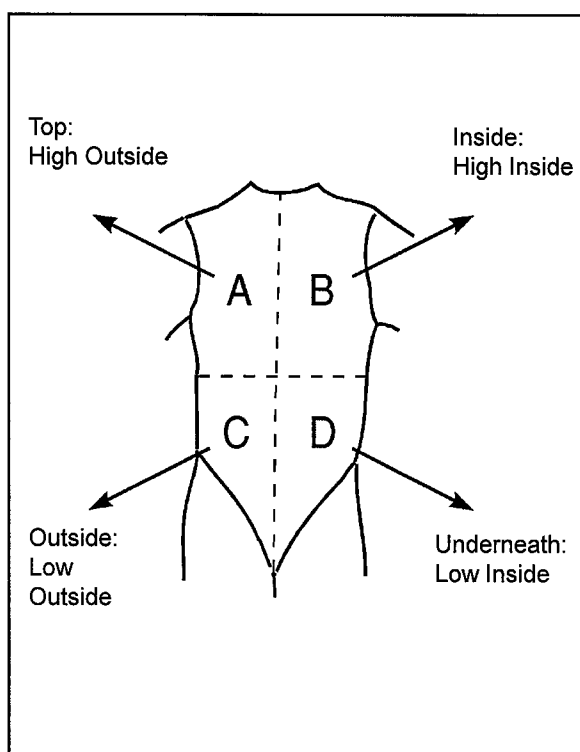
To give a name to offensive actions and to describe the target to be reached.

III - CLASSIFICATION

The valid target area of the body is divided into four parts determined by two perpendicular lines crossing each other at their centres. The horizontal line designates the high and low lines. The vertical line designates the right and left lines.

The four 'lines' thus determined are called:

- A - *Top:*
High outside line
- B - *Inside:*
High inside line
- C - *Outside:*
Low outside line
- D - *Underneath:*
Low inside line



The Lines

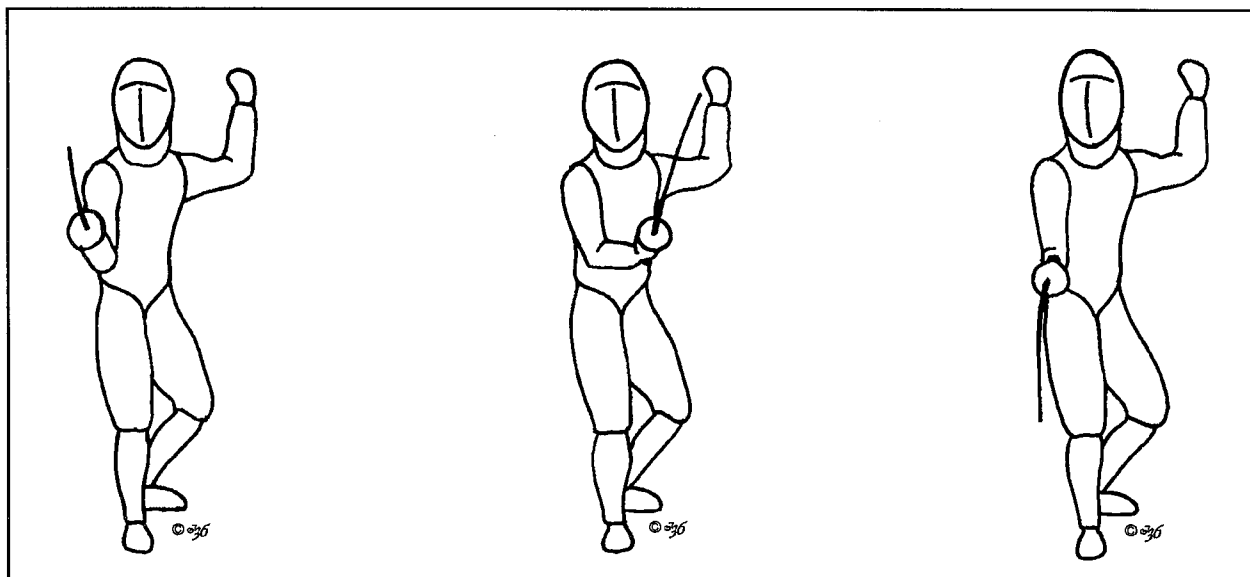
THE FENCING POSITIONS

I - DEFINITION

The position taken by the hand in relation to the different lines determines the fencing positions.

II - OBJECTIVE

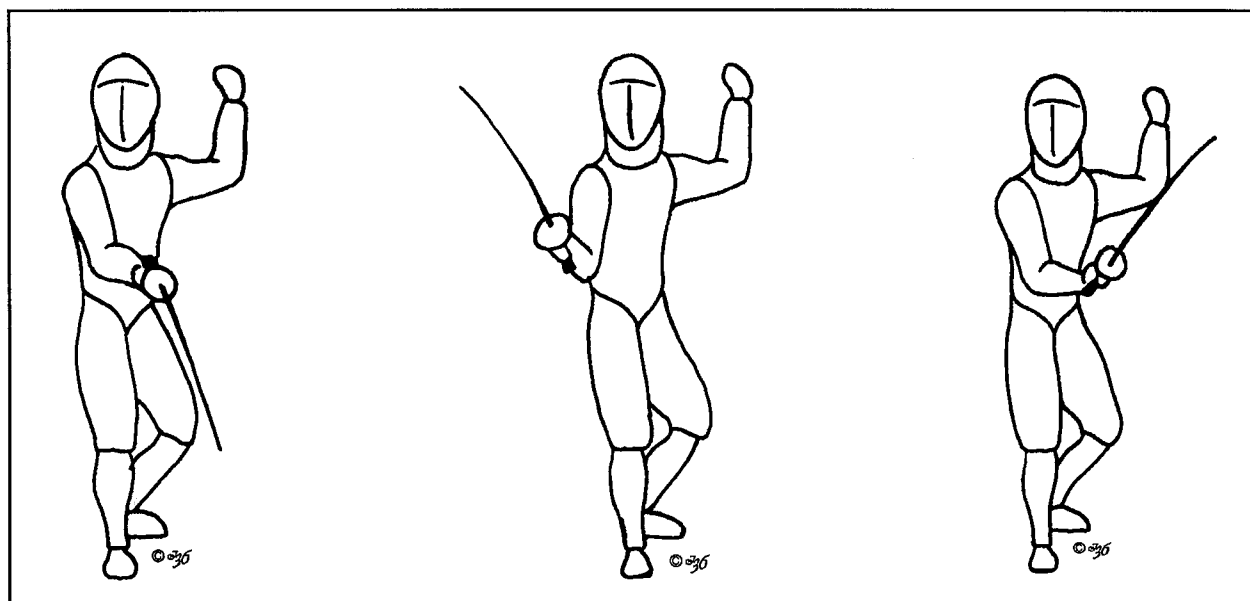
To achieve positions which can be used as a basis for parries and for allowing the closing of the different lines.



Position of Sixte

Position of Quarte

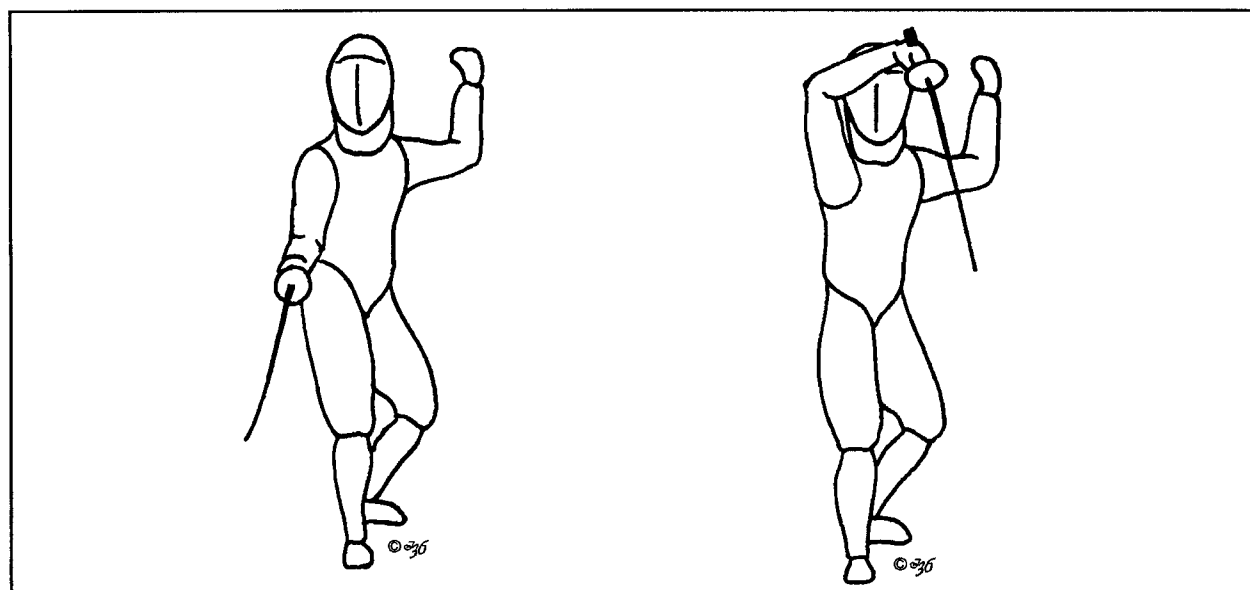
Position of Octave



Position of Septime

Position of Tierce

Position of Quinte



Position of Seconde

Position of Prime

III - CLASSIFICATION

The blade may have the following position in relation to the hand:

- Point higher than the hand
- Point lower than the hand

The hand may also take up one of two positions:

- Supinated (nails on top)
- Pronated (nails underneath)

The combination of these diverse positions of hand and blade constitute the fencing positions which between them serve as a basis for the parries.

A - Supinated positions

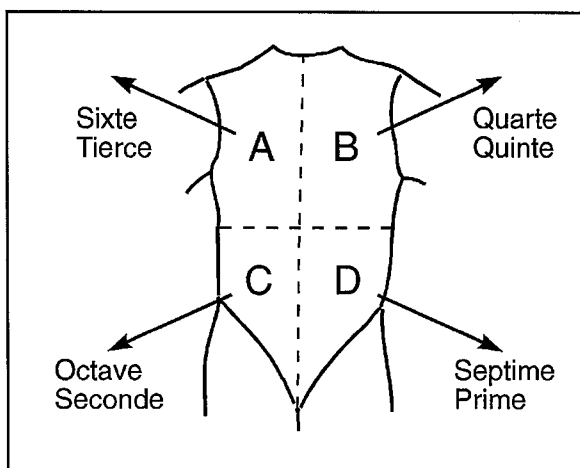
- Sixte*
The hand to the right slightly turned with the nails on top, point higher than the hand.
- Quarte*
The hand to the left, slightly turned with the nails on top, point higher than the hand.
- Octave*
The hand to the right, nails on top, point lower than the hand.
- Septime*
The hand to the left, nails on top, point lower than the hand.

B - Pronated positions

- Tierce*
The hand to the right, nails underneath, point higher than the hand.
- Quinte*
The hand to the left slightly turned, nails underneath, point higher than the hand.
- Seconde*
The hand to the right, nails underneath, point lower than the hand.
- Prime*
The forearm horizontal, hand turned, nails towards the right, thumb underneath, point lower than the hand (Rules of 1908).

These fencing positions correspond to the following lines:

- Top: *Sixte - Tierce*
- Inside: *Quarte - Quinte*
- Outside: *Octave - Seconde*
- Underneath: *Septime - Prime*



The fencing positions

IV - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The portion of the valid target area of the body contained between the right or left hand side of the weapon and the limit of the valid areas of the body which determine the line, is variable. On the other hand, the position taken by the forearm, the hand and the weapon of the fencer is clearly defined and allows him to cover the valid side of the body corresponding to the line.

The position of low or high line can be determined by the following actions:

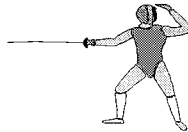
- The Disengagement*
When executed from high line to high line, it is done by passing the *point underneath the opponent's blade*. Executed from low to low line, it is done by passing the *point over the opponent's blade*.
- The Counter parry*
When executed in the high line, it is done by passing *underneath the opponent's blade*. In the low line, it is done by passing *over the opponent's blade*.
- The position taken by the hand to do a ceding parry*
The position of the hand corresponds to a position diagonally opposed to the line in which the taking of the blade is ending.
eg.
Opposition in Octave: Quinte or low quarte
Opposition in Sixte: Prime or high septime

The fencing positions give their names to the parries, of which there are eight, and each has its respective counter parry. Some of these parries are rarely used. Those done with the hand in supination are more precise and allow the avoidance of the opponent's blade to be made more easily.

Nowadays some of these terms have disappeared. We tend to call the low line 'underneath' even though these actions are always executed 'outside' the nearest opposing target.

The lines determined in Foil are equally valid in Epee. We add, by convention, the head, arm,

forearm and hand into the high line and the front leg to the low line. Due to the absence of conventions in Epee, the target areas of, in particular, the hand and forearm need to be considered. Following the same procedure as earlier, we define four surfaces: top, inside, outside and underneath.



CHAPTER VIII

THE ENGAGEMENT

I - DEFINITION

In this situation the blades are in contact. The engagement is the action of bringing the blade into contact with the opponent's blade.

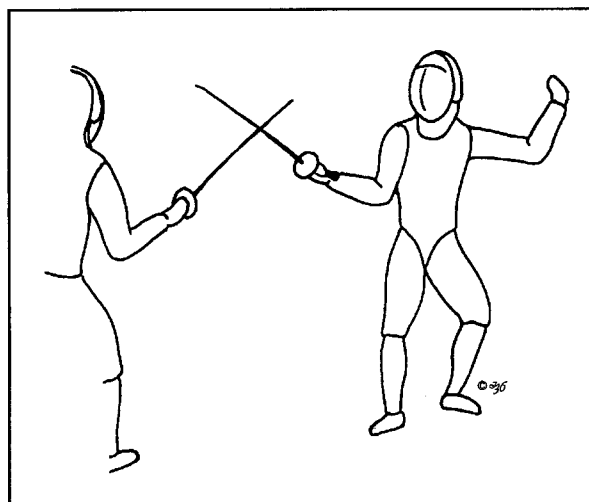
II - TECHNIQUE

There are as many engagements as fencing positions. The name of the engagement is the same as the corresponding position. On the other hand, there are differing methods of engaging. In general these are a function of the position of the opponent's blade.

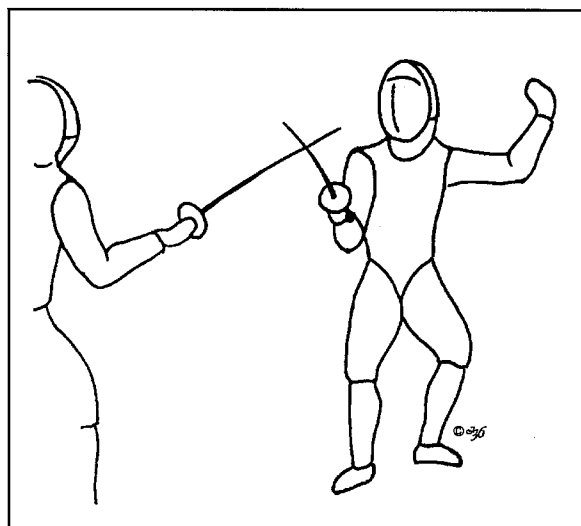
The movements of the blade can be made:

- 1) *Lateral*
eg: from sixte position to quarte
- 2) *Circular*
eg: from sixte position to sixte
- 3) *Diagonal*
eg: from sixte position to septime
- 4) *Semi-circular*
eg. from sixte position to octave

Whichever method is used, the engagement is done:



Engagement of Sixte



Engagement of Quarte

- 1) *By a displacement of the blade with the point predominating and by the shortest movement possible*
The search for immediate contact with the opponent's blade allows the fencer, through his feel, to control the opponent's blade.
- 2) *With the edge of the blade at a height 2/3 of the way along the blade from the guard.*
It is critical that contact be made with the most advanced portion of the opponent's blade, but it is also important that it be with a portion of the blade having *sufficient rigidity*, and sensitive to tactile perception.
- 3) *With sufficient perpendicularity of the blades*
The blades should always be at an angle which avoids any slipping of blade against blade as well as avoiding exaggerated divergence of the point.

- 4) *With displacement of the hand so as to obtain the cover required in the line in which the engagement is executed*

The hand is moved while maintaining firm but supple contact with the opponent's blade.

III - TACTICAL STUDY

The sheer mobility of modern Foil and the horizontal or low position of the opponent's blade are some of the factors which make the engagement difficult or ineffective.

Many offensive actions are launched without any preliminary engagement, which hampers some fencers, but it makes counter attacking easy. One should therefore not neglect the possibility of making contact with the opponent's blade to ensure the offensive.

The engagement must be made judiciously; it should not be the result of a reflex action which the opponent can take advantage of. The speed of execution and the intensity developed on the opponent's blade, are obviously dependent on the tactical intentions of the fencer.

All engagements used to prepare an attack justify in general, a very short period of contact with the opponent's blade - short enough to potentially be mistaken for actions on the blade (such as pressures) - and to allow the attack to be developed rapidly, while preventing the opponent acting on the blade.

The fraction of a second during which the blades are in contact enables control of the opponent's blade to be achieved, and the exploitation of the weakness or strength of the opponent's hand. In defensive actions, it also allows a degree of perception as to the nature of the attack.

The covering which completes the engagement is essential in order to avoid an attack as soon as the blades make contact, even in the same line as the engagement. It also has the objective of forcing a fencer to cover himself either by resisting, or by changing lines (two fencers unable to be covered in the same line), potentially providing an opening which can be exploited.

The engagement can have the purpose of provoking the opponent's attack (derobement); in this case it is executed more slowly and slightly larger to give the impression of a reflex action, allowing it to be easily perceived and deceived.

This technique then allows ripostes with second intention to be carried out. The engagement preceding the attack is executed while moving the hand forward to act upon the middle section of the opponent's blade and to penetrate more deeply within the opponent's guard, thereby assisting the attack.

IV - FAULTS TO AVOID

- 1) *Delay of the point*
Cover is momentarily incomplete, the blade and the hand are not moving in the same plane. This fault is to be found particularly in diagonal and lateral engagements.
- 2) *Engagement made on the foible of the opponent's blade*
The opponent's blade moves or escapes, thereby forestalling any chance of acting effectively.
- 3) *Engagement made on the forte of the opponent's blade*
A much rarer fault, which makes any actions that the fencer might be making on the opponent's blade ineffective as they are done too close to the leverage point (laws of leverage).
- 4) *Blades insufficiently crossed*
Does not provide sufficient angulation to prevent the blades sliding on one another. Any actions on the opponent's blade lack accuracy and are ineffective.
- 5) *Late or insufficient cover*
Exposes the fencer to simple attacks in the line of engagement.
- 6) *Engagement with the flat side of the blade*: the blade may bend in an exaggerated manner and thus actions on the blade lack accuracy and authority.
- 7) *Slow or large engagements*
These are easy to deceive and sometimes draw the hand outside the line.

V - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The skill with which a fencer can use the weapon depends on three principal factors:

1) *The grip on the weapon* (see Chapter I)

2) *Fingerwork*

This is the ability to guide and displace the point of the weapon in both offensive and defensive actions, solely by the action of the fingers. This ability can only be gained by long hours spent in lessons to obtain the necessary mechanics and muscular independence required of the different fingers.

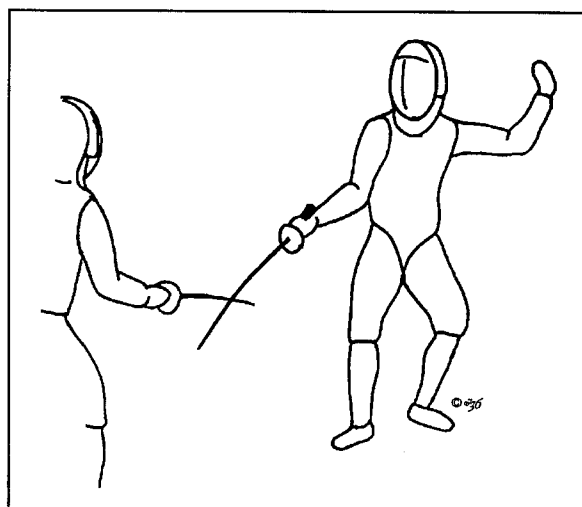
3) *Feeling for the blade*

This allows the fencer to perceive the intensity of the actions through the blade and fingers and to execute actions. This is considered a fencer's sixth sense and is the result of lengthy development of the tactile sense. As with fingerwork, to which it is intrinsically linked, feeling for the blade is the result of long practice. This mechanism, combined with muscular independence, allows the fencer to react by reflex in a very short period of time.

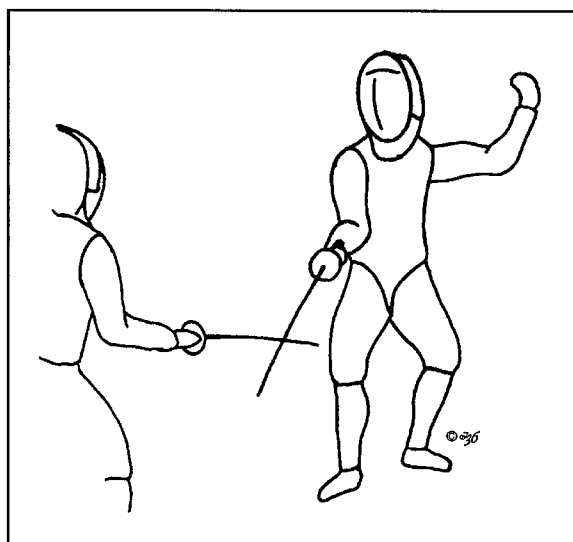
The quality of the engagement therefore depends on these three factors, however the distance separating the fencers often makes the engagement difficult or ineffective.

The fencer wishing to take the opponent's blade must precede the engagement with a step forward or exaggerated extension of the arm. In order to reduce the risk of an attack on the step forward or action on the blade by the opponent, the fencer coordinates the engagement and the step forward, giving slightly greater priority to the contact of the blades, committing himself only with caution by the displacement of the front foot. Although the risk is not totally avoided, this method makes the defence more effective.

It is possible to take the opponent's blade when he is in a classical low or high line position. On the other hand, it is impossible to ensure a good engagement against a horizontal position of the blade employed by numerous foilists. In that case it will be necessary to make the opponent move his blade by preparatory feints which will lead his blade into a line in which one can act effectively.



Engagement of Octave



Engagement of Septime

VI - CONSIDERATIONS PARTICULAR TO EPEE & SABRE

A - The engagement in Epée, although possible, is certainly not recommended.

- 1) The necessary displacement of the hand and blade uncovers the advanced target; the action is therefore prone to attacks and counter attacks by the opponent.
- 2) Even though the blades are more rigid, the usual Epée distance does not allow effective taking of the opponent's blade.

The epeeist wishing to create an opportunity to use the engagement to develop his attack without undue risk using the foil engagement as a model, should ensure that the angle between the blades is not too great and that the point will always menace the nearest valid target area.

B - In Sabre, the distance, near vertical position of the blades and the ever possible counter attacks, practically remove any benefit to be had from the engagement.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

From the very first lessons, the Master uses the engagement to place his student's hand in the different positions, starting with those most commonly used. In passing from one to the next, the student gets used to moving the hand and arm in space with the Master's blade as a guide, assisting him in finding a properly covered position in each line. The search for contact with the blade starts the education of the fingers and the hand and leads towards blade feeling.

In this manner the Master develops the strength of the student's weapon hand, controls the firmness of the engagement by light pressures, and improves the students stability and position using absence of the blade. The change of engagement is an excellent exercise which can be used to educate the fingers, and the Master should work those which are executed with the hand in supination.

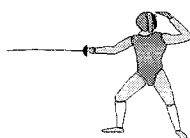
Two fencers cannot both be covered in the same line. It is critically important to the lesson, *that the*

student always be covered, which obliges the Master to slightly shift his hand and point *while always maintaining his weapon as an extension of the forearm*. He should place his blade so as to avoid large movements of the pupil's point, especially during change of engagements. The intensity of the resistance the Master provides at the time when the student covers should never cause an exaggerated muscular contraction.

The development distance requires the Master to slightly advance the hand to ensure that the blades meet on the middle part. As the student progresses, the Master should teach him to engage while moving his hand forwards, and to take the blade under the best conditions.

From the start the Master can follow the engagement with a step forward. It is possible to ask students with normal coordination to execute: the engagement simultaneous with the displacement of the front foot and the extension of the weapon arm during the displacement of the rear foot, followed by the development. The Master should make sure that the arm is completely extended, the torso well positioned and the rear leg properly flexed.

As soon as possible the Master should start varying the distance and displacements, and increasing the difficulty of the engagement by providing his student with only a brief moment in which to take the blade and develop the offensive action. Young fencers are always alienated by the mobility of the opponent's hand. It is therefore indispensable that they become used to acting on a blade which is constantly moving, and to execute actions with or without preparatory contact so as to develop hand/eye co-ordination, a sense of timing and opportunity, and reflexes.



CHAPTER IX

THE CHANGE OF ENGAGEMENT AND THE DOUBLE ENGAGEMENT

1 - DEFINITIONS

A) The change of engagement is an engagement taken in the opposite line to the current line (Rules 1908).

B) The double-engagement consists of two immediate, successive change of engagements, or the immediate succession of an engagement and a change of engagement.

II - TECHNIQUE

A - The change of engagement

The execution of the change of engagement is a function of the position of the engagement.

- 1) The change of engagement from high line to the opposite high line is executed by passing the point underneath the opponent's blade.
- 2) The change of engagement from low line to opposite low line is executed by passing the point above the opponent's blade (Rules 1908).
- 3) The change of engagement is given the name of the position in which it finishes.

The technical conditions of execution described in the preceding chapter on the engagement are applicable to the change of engagement.

B - The double engagement

- 1) *Starting from a previous engagement:*
This movement is executed in two extremely rapid fencing times.
 - a) A change of engagement executed from the extremity of the blade without any intensity nor covering on the blade side. The hand stays in place.

b) A second change of engagement executed in the opposite direction to retake the initial engagement with varying intensity.

2) *Without previous engagement*

This movement is also executed in two fencing times:

- a) A rapid engagement executed with light contact, without covering on the side of the blade.
- b) An immediate change of engagement executed in the opposite line with the desired intensity to allow for covering, or for developing, an offensive action.

The technical conditions of execution described in the preceding chapter on the engagement are applicable to the double engagement.

III - TACTICAL STUDY

A - Change of engagement

Two fencers cannot be covered in the same line. The one whose blade has been engaged must change the engagement if he wishes to re-dominate his opponent's blade. The change of engagement can also have the aim of confusing the opponent's offensive actions when it is preceded by an engagement. The immediate change of line stops the opponent executing his favourite preparations and offensive actions.

In offensive movements the change of engagement permits the fencer to secure the blade in the desired line to prepare or launch an offensive action. In this case the displacement of the hand forwards is more or less accentuated depending on tactical intentions.

The change of engagement is also used to provoke the opponent's offensive actions and thus gives the opportunity to execute efficient parries and ripostes. With this in mind, it is executed more slowly, with the aim of resembling a reflex movement.

B - The double engagement

Whether preceded by an engagement, or executed by taking the blade, the double-engagement allows the fencer to secure the opponent's hand and to move into distance with more security. It is therefore employed mostly by fencers of small stature for whom the game obliges moving into distance before each offensive action.

In offensive actions, the double-engagement is an effective preparation; the opponent's hand is secured by the first very light contact with the blade, which only triggers a delayed defensive reflex. According to the tactical intention, the point can be placed more or less deeply into the opponent's guard during the second part the double-engagement. The intensity given to the second contact with the opponent's blade can be variable or blend with an action on the blade to reinforce the offensive action. Executed very precisely, the double-engagement thwarts and sometimes prevents the opponent's deceiving attacks by gathering the blade in all lines.

IV - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults discussed in the chapter on the engagements are valid for the change of engagement and the double-engagement.

V - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The weight of the electric foil, the thickness of the end of the blade, and the weight of the point

removes a large part of finesse from Foil fencing. Engagements and changes of engagement are less

employed, while double and triple engagements have a tendency to disappear to the profit of offensive actions with absence of blade.

Engagements and changes of engagements used until the appearance of the electric weapon were nearly exclusively in the high line. Nowadays the low line on guard position that is frequently adopted by fencers, justifies their use in this line and thus the necessity to work on them in the lesson. Without recommending them, the change of engagements and even double-engagements can be executed in the high line by passing the point above the opponent's blade. This rare procedure can surprise the opponent, but it is easier to derobe.

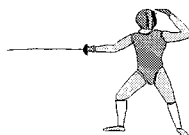
The best fencers avoid allowing their blade to be taken - it is a risk that they no longer take. Defence in the electric weapon has lost some speed, and thus it becomes difficult to engage or change the engagement. As blade contact is now constantly broken, or even non-existent, one must act in the appropriate fraction of a second and as simply as possible.

VI - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The teaching recommendations given for the engagement are applicable to the change of engagement or the double engagement.

As often as possible the Master must make the student do change of engagements and double engagements before defensive actions, to make him become used to passing rapidly from one line to another. Sometimes he derobes the change of engagement or double engagement in order to remove the point of contact that the pupil tries to seek, and he can then observe the accuracy of the displacement of the pupil's hand. Changes of engagement and double engagements are excellent exercises for developing the finger dexterity and feeling for the blade. It is indispensable to execute them in all the positions, the hand in supination and to combine them with a step forward. The Master who uses these exercises often will give the pupil a great deal of hand dexterity.

He gets the pupil familiar to passing from one line to another, reacting to a light contact and dominating the opponent's blade before launching his offensive action.



CHAPTER X

ABSENCE OF BLADE - THE INVITATION

I - DEFINITIONS

A - Absence of blade

An action that consists of releasing contact with the opponent's blade.

B - The invitation

An action that consists of deliberately opening a line.

II - TECHNIQUE

The absence of blade and the invitation take their name from the line that is opened. For example, being in the sixte position and moving to the position of quarte gives the invitation in the sixte line.

A - Absence of blade

The blades are engaged: break the contact by a movement of the blade and possibly of the hand.

B - The invitation

Whether or not the blades are engaged, move to a correct position in any desired line.

III - TACTICAL STUDY

A - The absence of blade permits the fencer to:

- 1) Withdraw the blade from the opponent's offensive actions.
- 2) Remedy the weakness of the hand by eluding the effects of strength.
- 3) Exploit the opponent's defensive reflexes. The reaction provoked by the absence of blade is very often opposite to that of the engagement and gives the possibility of executing a direct action.

B - The invitation

The invitation enables the fencer to provoke a simple or compound offensive action, and then to profit from it. To be effective, it must be combined with a step forward or a jump, and its size is a function of tactical intentions.

IV - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sometimes the absence of blade is the result of an instinctive movement that has been repeated too often and is easily exploited by the opponent. For offensive actions, in order that the absence of blade induce the desired reaction from the opponent, it is indispensable that the preceding engagement be firm and executed laterally to avoid the sliding of blade against blade.

The invitation, the aim of which is to provoke an offensive action, also has the advantage of providing the opportunity for excellent parries and ripostes with second intention. It is, however, very difficult to use. Even executed casually at the desired distance and speed, it is nearly always visible. It is a trap into which few experienced fencers allow themselves to fall. In the majority of cases, the invitation will provoke a compound attack, the fencer can therefore parry or counter attack according to his tactical intention.

V - SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR EPEE AND SABRE

In Epee, the invitation is employed to induce an attack to the advanced target. A simple

displacement of the point or the hand exposes the fencer and makes him vulnerable. However, it should be remembered that the opponent usually attacks with a degree of circumspection using simple actions because of the threat of simple counter-offensive actions and because it can be difficult for him to decide whether the displacements of the point and hand are deliberate or the result of varied, instinctive movements. Deliberately leaving the front leg and foot exposed can induce an offensive action and accommodate a rapid counter-offensive action.

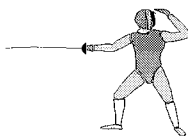
In Sabre, as in Epée, a slight displacement of the blade or the hand can provoke an offensive action to the advanced target. In this case parries and ripostes with second intention (with step, lunge, flèche) are used. The invitation, combined with a step or jump, of varying amplitude, can attract an offensive action to the body (simple or compound) or to the advanced target. In these two cases,

according to the tactical intention of the fencer, it allows for the use of a parry or a counter-offensive movement.

VI - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Master uses absence of blade to control the position of the student in the different lines. If the pupil presses too heavily on the blade when engaging, he quickly releases the pupil's blade which is suddenly dragged out of the line in which it had been placed.

The invitation executed by the Master allows the pupil to extend the weapon arm, without being guided and with no contact. When executed by the pupil, it will teach him to displace his hand and weapon in space, and to return to different lines according to the actions required. The Master must use the invitation, combined with steps forward and parries as an exercise for coordination.



CHAPTER XI

THE SIMPLE ATTACKS

I - DEFINITION

The simple attack is an offensive action comprising only one "fencing time", executed with a lunge or flèche.

II - CLASSIFICATION

There are 3 varieties of simple attacks:

- the straight hit
- the disengagement
- the cutover

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

A - The straight hit

This is the simplest action that only requires the extension of the weapon arm followed by a lunge or a flèche. It can be executed in every line. According to the line in which it is to hit (high line or low line), it can be executed with the hand in supination or pronation.

1) In the high line

The arm extends with the hand in complete supination at shoulder height, the point slightly lower than the hand. The hit is carried through by leg action. All of this occurs in one fencing time.

2) In the low line

The arm extends with the hand in supination or pronation and lower than the shoulder, the point higher than the hand. The hit is carried forward by the action of the legs. All of this occurs in one fencing time.

B - The disengagement

The disengagement is an attack carried from the line of the engagement into another line by the shortest route.

1) From the high line to opposite high line

While the hand remains in complete supination, pass the point into the opposite high line by

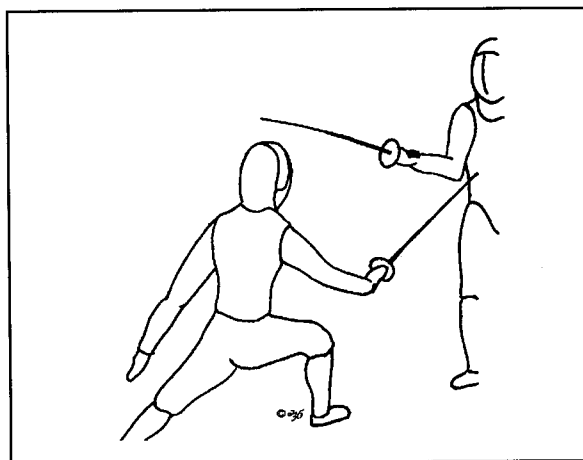
finger action, as far forward as possible under the opponent's arm while extending the sword arm, the point slightly lower than the hand. The hit is carried forward by leg action. All of this occurs in one fencing time.

2) From the low line to the opposite low line

With the hand remaining in supination, pass the point into the opposite low line by finger action, as far forward as possible above the opponent's arm by extending the sword arm, the point clearly lower than the hand. The hit is carried forward by leg action. All of this occurs in one fencing time.

3) From the high line to the low line

The hand passing from supination to pronation, lower the point from the high line into the low line as far forward as possible by extending the sword arm, the hand lower than the shoulder, the point clearly higher than the hand. The hit is carried by the action of the legs. All of this occurs in one fencing time.



Attack low, hand in seconde

4) *From the low line to the high line*

The hand remaining in supination, make the point pass from the low line into the high line by finger action, as far forward as possible by extending the sword arm with the hand at shoulder height, the point slightly lower than the hand. The hit is carried by the action of the legs. All of this occurs in one fencing time.

C - The cutover

The cutover is an attack carried out from the line of the engagement to another line by passing above the opponent's point by the shortest route.

1) *From the high line to the opposite high line*

The hand executes a slight rotation towards the interior (pronation) to free the pommel of the foil, pass the blade over the opponent's point by moving the fingers and slightly bending the wrist and forearm. Extend the arm with the hand in supination at shoulder height and the point lower than the hand. The hit is carried forward by the action of the legs. All of this occurs in one fencing time.

2) *From the low line to the opposite low line*

The hand remaining in supination, pass the blade in front of the opponent's point by finger action, bending the wrist and slightly drawing back the forearm. Extend the arm with the hand lower than the shoulder and the point clearly lower than the hand. The hit is carried forward by leg action. All of this occurs in one fencing time.

3) *From the high line to the low line or vice-versa*

The technical execution does not vary, only the target reached justifies the final position of the hand and the point.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

A - The straight hit

The technical execution of the straight hit varies according to the target to be reached. The straight hit from the high line is executed in the same way

as that described in the study of the development. On the other hand, when it is intended to hit in the low line, it is preferable for the attacker to finish the action with the hand in pronation and the point higher than the hand.

The straight hit in the low line is executed with the hand more or less low and with pronation in the final part of the action. This is an angulated movement which makes classical defensive actions less effective. The parries of octave and septime are often insufficient and force the fencer to execute them with a step back and exaggerated to give them more authority.

Many fencers have a defensive system that is superior in the high line. The straight hit in the low line is effective because it forces them to use inhabitual defensive actions. From left hander to right hander or vice-versa, the straight hit in the low line can be executed with the hand in supination. The outside line with opposite handed fencers offers a perpendicular target in relation to the bend of the blade.

1) *Straight hit without blade contact*

Tactically the straight hit is executed in two ways:

a) *Straight hit into an open line*

The straight hit is executed in a line left open by the opponent. It is rare in a bout that such an opportunity occurs with minimal risk. As the corresponding defensive actions are easy and rapid, the attacker must be faster than the parrier, or else use a change of rhythm (much practiced) that is adapted to certain bouting circumstances.

b) *Straight hit on the absence of blade*

The straight hit on the absence of blade is an action of timing that can be executed on an opponent who leaves the blade with reflex movements of a certain size. Its execution must be judged with certitude in order to avoid the ever present possibility of a trap.

2) *Straight hit with blade contact:*

a) *Into an insufficiently closed line*

The straight hit is executed on an opponent's

preparation that lacks authority or an engagement that does not completely close the line. In these two cases the action on the opponent's blade must be very light to avoid provoking a defensive reflex which leads to the closing of the line. The opposition on the side of the opponent's blade is only done in the final part of the development or of the flèche when the fort of the blade is in contact with the weak part of the opponent's blade.

b) *With authority*

The straight hit is executed in the line of the engagement, even when this is correctly closed. To obtain access to the target, the action on the opponent's blade must overcome the resistance by its strength and sufficient raising of the hand to penetrate the guard. In this case, the straight hit is an offensive action of force executed often with a flèche that allows easier blade domination. It is used more by tall fencers.

B - The disengagement

The disengagement allows the hit to land in a line other than that of the engagement. Deliberate contact with the opponent's blade allows the fencer to reinforce this offensive action while hindering the opponent's defensive action.

The disengagement from the high line to the opposite high line is frequently used. The weight of the electric foil and the inertia of the point interferes with finger action, which leads the fencer to use the disengagement from a corresponding or opposite high line to a low line - in this way the path taken by the point is the shortest. The disengagement finishing in the high line is executed with the hand in supination, in the low line with the hand in pronation.

It is indispensable to take into account the target to be reached and the bend of the blade to obtain sufficient blade perpendicularity to avoid flat hits or hits outside the valid target area. For the same reasons, a left handed fencer to right hander finishes the disengagement in the line outside the hand in supination, and the line under the hand in pronation. The disengagement from low line to opposite low line and from low line to corresponding or opposite high line is often justified by the low hand position adopted by certain fencers and although less effective, it serves as an excellent preparation for compound attacks since the movement of the hand

provokes the closing of the high line.

C - The cutover

Like the disengagement, the cutover offers the possibility of hitting in a line other than that of the engagement. The backwards movement of the blade, and the flexion of the wrist and forearm, give the cutover an amplitude that is clearly perceptible by the opponent. Hence it is preferable to use it against fencers displaying a point position which allows one to limit flexion of the wrist and forearm.

As an offensive action, the cutover is used practically exclusively from the high line to the opposite high line. In very rare cases, for example in close-in fighting, it is used in the low line because it allows the fencing phrase to be continued. The advantage of the cutover lies in the difficulty that it presents for being parried sufficiently by lateral or circular parries. The cutover from high line to corresponding or opposite low line increases the distance taken by the point and requires an arm movement that hinders precision. However, the cutover that finishes in the outside line of a left hander presents certain advantages.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults discussed in the development remain valid in the execution of simple attacks. Only specific faults are given below:

- 1) *Lateral movement of the arm in the disengagement*
Hinders precision and facilitates defensive actions.
- 2) *Hand too low in actions executed with the hand in supination*
The point is higher than the hand and the hit risks landing flat or passing. The insufficient covering facilitates the opponent's riposte.
- 3) *Hand too high in actions executed with the hand in pronation*
Facilitates the use of classical low line parries.
- 4) *Exaggerated drawing back of the forearm in the cutover*
Renders the cutover too visible, delays the beginning of the lunge and often results in an attack with a shortened arm.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ease of execution of simple attacks is not an important factor in their effectiveness - a simple defensive action is sufficient to make them fail. Even if they are well judged and prepared, they require certain qualities to be effective.

Added to the *indispensable coordination* necessary for the execution of any offensive action is another basic quality - namely *acceleration*. It is difficult to master the defensive reflexes of the opponent, necessary for executing a simple action. The rapid offensive action provokes, in a fencer well trained, an easy, rapid defence, leaving little chance for the attack to reach the target. The defensive actions of a fencer are very closely linked to his nervous system and his visual awareness is permanently stimulated by the opponent's movements.

These movements (blade, hand, arm etc) executed slowly do not provoke immediate defensive reflexes, and allow the offensive action to be launched and accelerated to maximum speed upon reaching the target (extension of the rear leg). This change of rhythm of the offensive action interferes with the defensive actions. It is very difficult for the defender to modify the speed of his parry which, generally, is delayed or sometimes non-existent.

The simple attack, even when well judged, will only reach the target if it is executed with excellent timing. Its preparation is important and increases its chances of success. Precision is a function of technical execution, and this is worked on during lessons and is obtained through repetition of the movements. In the bout the fencer must apply himself to maintaining *perfect balance*, constant *muscular relaxation* and possess a very good *notion of distance*.

The straight hit is the simple attack "par excellence" and requires the greatest timing. Its technique makes it an attack that is easy to execute, but difficult to use tactically. It is used most often on an opponent's fault or loss of concentration.

The disengagement is effective if its technical execution allows the point to reach the target by the shortest route. The action of the fingers is important and must allow the fencer to lodge the point as far forward as possible under the opponent's arm and to make it pass at the last possible moment into the desired line. The opponent cannot see the point and has doubts as to the target area that the attack is to reach.

The cutover, due to its technique, is a simple attack that is clearly visible as soon as it begins, which takes away any surprise element. For this reason it is nearly always reinforced by premeditated actions on the opponent's blade (beat, pressure, change of engagement etc). It must only be used with certitude because, in spite of all the precautions required for its use, it often attracts a counter-attack which nearly always gains a fencing time.

The cutover allows the fencer to easily take domination of the blade and to hit in a line that is incompletely closed, even completely closed, by taking the form of an authoritative action that is often executed with a *flèche*. With or without the blade, its execution requires a maximum reduction of movement in the forearm. The slight rotation of the wrist (pronation) liberates the pommel from the wrist, lifts the point, and facilitates lateral movement of the blade while limiting the backward movement of the forearm. As soon as the blade passes above the opponent's blade, the hand is repositioned as rapidly as possible *in supination* at the same time as the arm *completely extends* in order to avoid an error of distance and *risking a flat hit or passing altogether*.

The defensive actions to employ against simple attacks are based on the use of parries corresponding to the line in which the attack terminates. According to the intention of the defender, they are combined with displacements. Certain fencers use parries which do not correspond to the line in which the attack finishes - these are called *contraction parries*. For example, parry of octave on a disengagement to the inside high line.

In particular cases against authoritative straight hits (straight hit executed in the opponent's closed line by the opposition of forte to foible) and cutovers, the classical defence corresponding to the line in which the attack finishes, can be reinforced by instinctive parries.

1) *On the authoritative straight hit*

It is wise to parry by ceding. For example, on the authoritative straight hit to the high line: prime or high septime.

2) *On the cutover in the high line, use the parry of lifted septime (circolo italiano)*

It requires less correctness than the parries of quarte or counter-sixte and allows for errors in

judging speed and length of the attack by covering all the high line.

VII- TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The master gives priority to the execution of simple attacks finishing in the high line, the hand in supination.

1 - The straight hit

Is studied with the development and is taught in three ways:

- a) *With the blade*
The Master guides and maintains the pupil's blade. This procedure allows the student to relax the shoulder and the arm by allowing him to place his hand and point in the best positions. In the final action of the hit the Master must, however, let go of the pupil's blade in order to force him to hold up his arm without support.
- b) *Absence of blade*
Allows for controlling the quality of the pupil's engagement. The Master must leave the pupil's blade laterally and clearly to promote tactile perception. It is useful to require an extension of the arm several times without a lunge, and to require this wherever the pupil has a tendency to develop the attack without the arm completely extended.
- c) *Without the blade*
The Master leaves a line open, the pupil can extend the arm at varying speeds either for a fast action, or for changing the rhythm. In the two cases, the Master must require the complete extension of the weapon arm with suppleness and muscular relaxation, as well as a rapid extension of the rear leg.

2 - The disengagement

The perfect execution of the disengagement requires finger work coordinated with the extension of the arm and the lunge. It can be taught in three ways:

- a) *With preliminary engagement*
That is to say with permanent blade contact. The pupil is obliged to maintain a good covering position, the Master covers in the line of engagement more or less rapidly in a way that the pupil easily perceives and avoids it by disengaging. This method is used with beginners, as it allows for controlling the engagement and the complete extension of the weapon arm.

- b) *On the engagement*
The Master engages with or without a step forward, the pupil disengages with or without blade contact. If the engagement is executed with a step, the Master must give priority to the engagement, and the length and speed of his displacement will depend on the ability of the pupil.

- c) *Preceded by the engagement*
According to the distance, the Master must give the blade in the best conditions. The pupil executes an offensive engagement, that is, by moving the hand forward in order to give the desired authority to his action and to provoke the Master's covering movement in the line of the engagement.

During this movement, preferably executed with a step forward, the Master must demand that the pupil control the blade when moving into distance, whilst giving priority to the engagement. Consequently he can occasionally deceive the engagement and depending on the pupil's standard, even attack him to provoke a parry riposte and so judge his stability.

3 - The cutover

The cutover is executed under the same conditions as the disengagement but the Master must place his point slightly lower, both to justify this offensive action and to limit the pupil's movements of the wrist, forearm and arm. He must pay particular attention to the complete extension of the weapon arm before execution of the lunge in order to avoid errors of distance or provoking a counter-offensive action.

CHAPTER XII

SIMPLE PARRIES

I - DEFINITION

Protecting oneself from an offensive action by deflecting the opponent's blade with the weapon.

II - CLASSIFICATION

The classification of simple parries is determined by movements of the blade and hand:

- 1) lateral or direct parries
- 2) circular or counter parries
- 3) diagonal parries
- 4) semi-circular parries

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

Whichever parry is employed, its execution must respect the following principles:

- 1) Give predominance to displacement of the blade and the point in order to meet the opponent's blade as early as possible.
- 2) Completely close the threatened line without exaggerating the movement, the point in line threatening the opponent's target.
- 3) Deflect the opponent's blade with the forte of the blade by one of the edges (First 1/3 of the blade situated near the hand, in order to have maximum authority).
- 4) Give sufficient perpendicularity to the blade in relation to the opponent's blade to avoid the latter from escaping too easily from the parry.

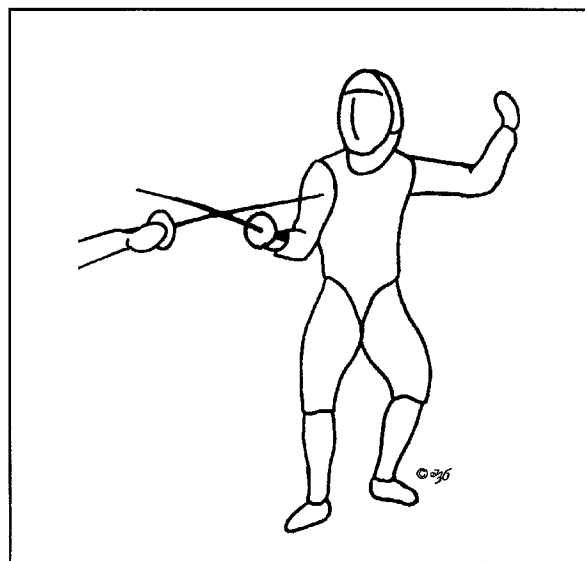
A - Description of simple parries

1) *Lateral parry*

The lateral or direct parry takes the blade in the line in which it is presented and deflects it away from the target while remaining in the same line. The hand moves in a horizontal line without being drawn back.

2) *Circular Parry*

The circular or "counter" parry takes the blade in the line in which it is presented and deflects it from the target by taking it into the opposite line. The hand remains in place and only the fingers move to manipulate the point under the opponent's blade and back into its original position.



The classical parry of quarte

3) *Diagonal parry*

The diagonal parry takes the blade in the line in which it is presented and deflects it from the target while leaving it in the same line. The hand and the blade move from the high line to the opposite low line or vice-versa.

4) *Semi-circular parry*

The semi-circular parry takes the blade in the line in which it is presented and deflects it from the target while leaving it in the same line. The fingers move to lower or raise the point and this movement is slightly accentuated by the forearm.

B - Execution of simple parries

Whether they are lateral, circular, diagonal or semi-circular, the parries are executed in two ways:

- with opposition
- with a rapid beating action

Parries can be executed by ceding on an opponent's offensive action that is developed with authority or by dominating the blade.

1) *Parries with opposition*

The parry with opposition consists of taking the opponent's blade without roughness and deflecting it completely from the target.

2) *Parry as a beat*

This parry consists of deflecting the opponent's blade with the aid of a sharp beating action.

3) *Ceding parry*

The ceding parry consists of taking the opponent's blade outside the opposite line by using the strength of the offensive action and in changing the point of pressure. The hand is held in the desired line while the blade does a rotation around the opponent's blade on the point of contact or pressure *without ever leaving* the blade. Ceding parries are preferably executed with the hand in pronation for the low line and the hand in complete supination for the high line.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

Whichever parry is used, and its mode of execution, it must protect the threatened area of the body

without exaggerated hand movements, the point near target in order to execute an effective riposte.

The lateral parry, since it is an easy and natural movement, allows the fencer to immediately deflect the opponent's blade. Therefore, it is recommended when the attack is well judged. Used carelessly, it exposes the fencer to *trompements* and aids offensive actions with disengagements executed at the end of the lunge. The lateral parry offers the advantage of executing very fast direct or indirect ripostes.

The circular parry leaves the hand in place but does not instantaneously deflect the opponent's blade and thus does not stop the forward progression of the attack during the execution of the parry. The path followed by the opponent's attack renders the point dangerous until the end of the parry. It risks the attack hitting off target (electric foil).

The circular parry is preferably recommended when the fencer is doubtful about the opponent's offensive action. When it is executed with a certain amplitude it can find the blade and deflect it, but it is obvious and risks being easily deceived. In every case it is useful to combine it with the step back. Direct and indirect ripostes executed after a circular parry are slightly less rapid than after a lateral parry.

The diagonal parry like the lateral parry can rapidly deflect the blade. In its execution, however, the positions of the point and blade are very important. Also the forearm must not be raised or lowered in order to reduce the risk of being deceived, especially when it is executed from high line to low line.

Direct or indirect ripostes executed after the diagonal parry are also very rapid.

The semi-circular parry takes and deflects the opponent's blade when it is presented between two lines. With minimal hand movement it is executed with a certain size and used when in doubt about the opponent's attack and often with a step back. However, it is easy to deceive. As in the circular parry its execution does not stop the attack from progressing forward and in the low line often carries the point onto the non-valid area.

The ripostes are nearly always indirect and are less rapid than those executed after diagonal parries.

In the bout, the execution of parries is a function of the technical execution of the opponent's offensive actions (hand, balance, speed etc...) and of tactical intention. It is indispensable to vary the parries to interfere with the opponent's game and to make effective ripostes.

The parry executed with opposition offers the

following advantages:

- 1) Permanent blade contact during the execution which allows the fencer to control and detect the opponent's reaction.
- 2) Accentuating it (pressure) makes the opponent react, thus facilitating indirect, compound or broken time ripostes.
- 3) Maintaining the blade avoids reflex remises.
- 4) Does not immediately provoke the opponent's defensive reflexes.

After the parry executed with opposition, ripostes sometimes lack immediacy and speed. But on fencers who have a "good hand", it often provokes remises because it induces errors in tactical reactions from the opponent. When the parry is accentuated (light pressure) it provokes return pressure and allows for indirect or compound ripostes. It is more often used in electric Foil because of the weight of the weapon and the necessity to control the blade to avoid the remise and to also riposte while dominating the blade (taking the blade).

The parry executed as a beat offers the following advantages:

- weakens the opponent's hand and delays defensive actions.

- execution of extremely rapid direct or indirect ripostes.

It does not facilitate compound ripostes and, when it is not correctly executed, can lead the hand and point out of line, which hampers the precision of the riposte.

The ceding parry is of limited usefulness because it is only executed on certain actions and rare are those fencers who, by reflex, do not oppose resistance to the strength of the opponent's offensive action. This parry remains the privilege of the great fencers. It does not provoke a reaction from the opponent, but must be executed with a step forward in order to avoid the ever possible remise. Its use is recommended against takings of the blade and authoritative straight hit, but it must be followed by direct ripostes.

Whatever parry is used and its mode of execution, it must be done at the correct time, that is to say between the instant when the opponent's

foot leaves the ground and when the point is about 10 centimetres from the target. If it is executed too early, the parry can be easily deceived; too late and it loses all effectiveness. The attack, which is by then very deep, no longer allows the fencer to act with the forte of the blade on the foible of the opponent's blade and forces the withdrawal of the hand. In this case, the parry borders on arriving too late to deflect the opponent's blade and, if successful, the following riposte always lacks effectiveness since the attacker is once more in a state of balance and can easily parry.

The use and the mode of execution of parries is an affair of judgement and tactics. The parrier can choose the moment of his parry when he has judged the opponent's attack. A parry as a beat taken at the beginning of the attack deflects the opponent's blade while the fencer is in the critical position of only having one contact point on the ground (rear foot). The riposte executed this way resembles an action on the blade into the preparation.

The moment of execution of the parry varies with the tactical intention. In general, it must meet the blade early for a direct riposte, a little bit later for an indirect or compound riposte in order to allow the fencer to regain a stable equilibrium and react as anticipated.

The choice of parry depends on the offensive action and the riposte chosen according to the opponent's reflexes, his tactical intentions, his speed and even his faults.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

1) *Delay of the point in the parry*

The line is not closed in time and does not stop the attack reaching the target, the parrier is obliged to exaggerate the displacement of the hand.

2) *Parry not blocked*

The hand, the blade and the point are taken out of line, the riposte lacks speed and precision and the parrier has difficulty taking a second parry if there has been a deception of the blade.

3) *Insufficient perpendicularity of the blades*

The opponent's blade risks can escape from the parry which often lacks strength.

4) *Parry with the foible of the blade*

- 4) *Parry with the foible of the blade*
The parry lacks authority and does not stop the attack from arriving.
- 5) *Parry with the flat face of the blade*
Originates from a bad hand position, the parry lacks authority and therefore the tactile sensitivity is reduced.
- 6) *Parry with drawing back of the arm*
The attack continues its progression forwards and forces the parrier to exaggerate the displacement of the hand and point in order to obtain sufficient covering.
- 7) *Parry with exaggerated hand rotation*
Leads the point vertically and horizontally outside the line. This fault takes on greater proportion in the inside and underneath lines and the ripostes are slow and lack precision.
- 8) *Insufficient Parry*
Does not prevent the attack reaching the target, or allows the point to hit off-target.

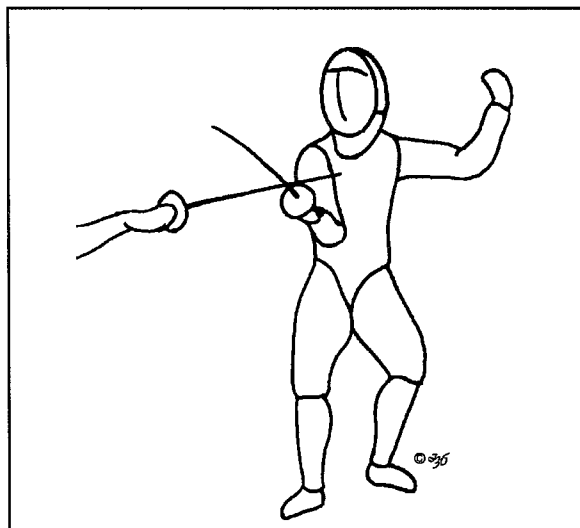
VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The parry can and must evolve according to the circumstances of the bout. It allows the opponent's blade to be deflected with maximum security and makes the riposte effective. The evolution of the parry is the geometric shape of a cone. The longer the parry (that is to say executed forwards) the less it necessitates lateral hand movements. The shorter the parry (that is to say executed towards the body) the more it requires larger lateral hand movements.

Generally it is:

- 1) *A shortened parry*
When the attack is developed with a flèche, with a step forward or lunge, or on a profoundly engaged step. Similarly, the short parry should be executed during a step forward.
- 2) *An extended parry*
When the attack is developed from a long distance or when it is taken with a step back to prevent the opponent's blade from escaping.

- 3) *A high or low parry*
When it evolves vertically in relation to the classical parry, to obtain more protection and take the opponent's blade with the forte to the foible of the blade.



The short parry of quarte

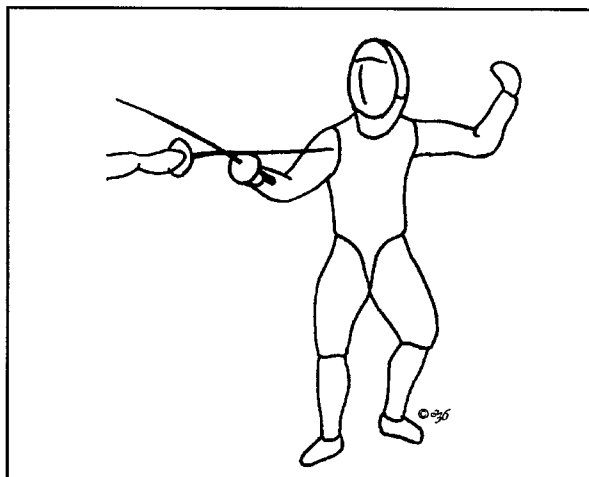
The circumstances of the bout forces the fencer to combine the parry with foot movements; these must be controlled and not hinder the riposte.

The parry with a step forward requires sure judgement of the attack - it protects the fencer from remises and breaks the opponent's counter-riposting distance. It is often used by short fencers.

The parry with a step back is more commonly used as it offers greater security. It is recommended when the fencer is in doubt of, or surprised by, the opponent's offensive action, and when the fencer's hand is weakened by an action on the blade. The riposte must be executed with a step forward, lunge or flèche.

Even though the parry should be executed by the forte on the foible of the opponent's blade, it frequently happens that in a bout it is done with the middle of the blade, especially in parries as beats. This part of the blade allows for early contact and obtains an action on the blade which is sharp and quite powerful. This prepares the way for a direct riposte which has a minimum distance to cover to reach target.

In modern fencing, parries with the hand in pronation are little used, although in general they display more authority. They often take the point out of line and do not allow the fencer to riposte with rapidity or precision.



The long parry of quarte

A perfect defence is one that uses all the parries and utilises those that correspond to the line in which the attack is directed. It is important to vary them as much as possible in order to reduce the risk of trompements and to combine them with displacements. Certain fencers use contraction parries in order to hinder the opponent's offensive actions. These allow the fencer to deflect the blade and to break up the opponents's game, but they are only to be used deliberately to reinforce the defensive actions.

It is said that there is contraction when the parry does not correspond to the attack; for example - for an attack on the inside, parry of counter of quarte, the hand in position of sixte.

A fencer's defence reflects his degree of technical skill and temperament. A beginner has a tendency to follow the opponent's blade and to move his hand into all the lines in which it is presented. An experienced fencer who has confidence in his hand/eye coordination and technique, waits for the opportune moment to parry.

The temperament of a fencer is reflected in his defence. A nervous, impressionable fencer generally has a mixed up defence. A calm fencer has a simple defence which is well controlled. Whichever defensive system employed, it is only of value if the parry is *immediately* followed by a riposte. The conventions of foil authorise this *as soon as there is blade contact*. This important reflex is learnt in lessons.

It is very difficult to become a good parrier; a good defensive system requires perfect technique and an enormous amount of judgement, coordination and reflexes, all of which are not within the reach of young fencers who progress more easily in offensive actions.

VII- TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The high line parries with the hand in supination are taught first. To get the pupil used to moving the hand and stopping it in the desired line, the Master must first teach the parry with opposition. It allows the pupil to maintain blade contact, to "feel" it and to make it easier to control his movement. The parry as a beat must only be taught when the pupil is capable of passing from one line to another while keeping the hand in the correct positions. The circular parry which leaves the hand in place can be taught from the beginning without difficulty.

To get a good parry the Master must respect the following principles:

- 1) *Present the blade with the arm completely extended, the point directed towards the target*
All actions with the arm shortened do not allow the blade to be presented under the best conditions and thus falsifies the timing of the parry since the attack is not generally destined to hit.
- 2) *The development*
While taking into account the speed and degree of training of the pupil, the attack must be intended to hit.
- 3) *Give the action sufficient intensity*
The pupil must deflect the blade and feel a *firm and supple resistance* during the execution of the parry.
- 4) *Block the lunge*
To be constantly at *exact riposting distance*, in order to stop the pupil leaning the torso forward to reach the target or that he does not lift the hand too high if the distance is too close.
- 5) *Open the line or react in the desired line to attract the riposte*
When making an invitation, be clear and precise. On covering, always give precedence to the point.
- 6) *Retake the blade*
Without roughness and reposition the pupil in the desired line to obtain good covering.

In the execution of parries, the Master must attach great importance to the movement of the point which, in order to close the line completely,

must have predominance over the hand. To ensure that the pupil remains in line, and to make him realise the necessity to block his movement when he does not contact the blade, the Master must sometimes deceive the parry. In this way, the pupil gets used to only riposting after having made contact with the blade or catching it in another line.

To get a high line parry, the Master presents his blade at the height of the pupil's right pectoral muscle and under the pupil's hand for a low line parry, taking into account in both cases, the on-guard position and the requested parry.

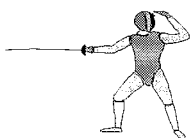
During the study of parries the Master must constantly make the student move. A static position is tiring and does not prepare him for the mobility of modern fencing. By combining parries with displacements, the Master can work towards recreating bouting situations, having regard for the level of training of the pupil.

When the Master requires a parry with opposition he must present the blade quite close to the pupil's blade so that he meets it immediately and maintains contact for as long as possible. The same applies for the execution of the circular parry, so as to limit the movement of the point and fingers and avoid displacement of the forearm.

To get the pupil to execute a beat parry, the blade can be presented a bit further away from the pupil's blade. The Master can precede his attack with a little sharp beat and make the student respond to the beat by executing the parry. This procedure offers the advantage of inciting the pupil to use his fingers at the moment that he executes the parry.

Electric foil frequently requires the use of low line parries. The Master must therefore have them practiced starting from different positions. He takes into account the difficulty of obtaining both good closure of the lines and good precision in the riposte because of the large movement of the point.

It is indispensable to practice parries starting with the arm extended. This is a form of exercise that creates the reflex of *going to the parry* and develops a feeling for the blade and finger dexterity. For example: starting from an engagement in sixte, the pupil makes a change of engagement followed by a beat and feint of a disengagement; the Master makes a change beat (counter quarte) followed by a straight hit. The pupil parries quarte (or counter sixte) and ripostes direct, or by disengagement, or by 1-2 or doublement.



CHAPTER XIII

RIPOSTES AND COUNTER-RIPOSTES

I - DEFINITIONS

Riposte: the riposte is the stroke which is made after having parried an attack.

Counter riposte: the counter-riposte is the stroke which is made after having parried a riposte or a counter-riposte.

II - CLASSIFICATION

The ripostes and counter-ripostes are classed into four categories:

- simple direct
- simple indirect
- compound (of one or several feints)
- by a taking of the blade

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

A - Description

1) *Simple direct*

The riposte or counter-riposte is simple direct when it is executed in the line in which the parry was taken.

2) *Simple indirect*

The riposte or counter-riposte is simple indirect when it is executed in a line other than that in which the parry was taken. It is executed using either a disengagement or a cut-over.

Note: The riposte or counter-riposte is simple indirect when it is executed on an opponent who changes the line (ie. covers, or closes the line) after having been parried. If the riposte deceives a circular parry (ie. it returns to the line in which the parry was taken) it is called a riposte by counter-disengagement.

3) *Compound*

The riposte or counter-riposte is compound when it deceives one or several parries provoked by one or several feints. It is done by one-two, doublement, high-low etc...

4) *By taking the blade*

The riposte or counter-riposte is executed by a taking of the blade when it maintains the blade after the parry and holds it until the final part of its execution. It is done by opposition, bind, envelopment etc.

B - Execution

Except for the ripostes or counter-ripostes executed by a taking of the blade (of which the technical execution is discussed in Chapter VXII), the ripostes or counter-ripostes, whether direct, indirect or compound can be executed:

- tac au tac (immediate)
- with broken time

1) *Tac au tac*

To be executed tac au tac, the riposte or counter-riposte must follow *immediately* after the parry, whether the parry is taken as a beat, with opposition or by ceding.

2) *Broken time*

When one or several fencing times separate the execution of the parry and that of the riposte or counter-riposte, it is said to be "broken time". It is preferably executed when the parry is taken with opposition.

The riposte and the counter-riposte are offensive actions that are executed at varying distances as a function of:

- displacements combined with the parry.
- the execution of the opponent's offensive action (lunge, flèche, step lunge etc...)

- from the position of the fencer or from his reactions after he has been parried (lunge, return to guard, jump back etc).

The riposte and the counter-riposte are therefore

- from a stationary position
- with a step forward
- with a lunge
- with a step forward lunge
- with a flèche

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

A - The riposte

The riposte is closely linked to the parry. Its execution depends on the nature of the parry. Finger dexterity and the feeling for the blade sometimes allows a fencer to exploit the opponent's reaction, but this is the domain of fencers of great class.

It is easier, and therefore more judicious, to give the parry the desired intensity which in most cases provokes the expected reaction. In general it is very difficult to execute a beat parry riposte that will provoke the opponent's reflex action. Despite some exceptions, certain tactical principles are to be respected.

1 - Riposte executed at close range (extension of the arm)

1) *Simple direct ripostes* are preferably executed after a parry as a beat which opens the line and deflects the opponent's blade.

2) *Simple indirect ripostes* are executed either after a parry as a beat or after an opposition parry.

a) After a parry executed as a beat on an opponent who has reacted well to the beat, or even on an opponent whose hand position after the attack does not hinder the change of line required for the riposte.

b) After a parry with opposition on an opponent possessing a good hand and for whom only the intensity of the parry forces a reaction. The riposte by cutover, which is large by nature, must only be executed after an opposition parry if you are sure of the opponent's reaction.

3) Compound ripostes, which may include in their execution several periods of fencing time, must be preceded by opposition parries reinforced by sufficient pressure and control in order to force the opponent to react and so avoid the risk of the remise.

4) Ripostes by taking the blade are recommended for use against opponents who systematically remise since they control and hold the opponent's blade during their execution. They are preceded by opposition parries and can be used efficiently at close range (riposting distance) middle distance (lunging distance) and long distance (flèche and step forward lunging distance).

2 - Ripostes executed at middle distance (lunging distance)

1) *Simple direct ripostes* are executed in two ways:

a) After a parry as a beat on the opponent's return to guard or after having executed a parry with a step back.

b) After a parry with opposition as in the preceding case. As they are less rapid, they risk being parried more easily.

2) *Simple indirect ripostes* are executed like direct ripostes but must take into account the opponent's reactions provoked by the parry with opposition, in order to avoid the remise which may gain a fencing time on the development.

3) *The compound ripostes*, for the same reasons as above must be preceded by a parry with opposition to be sure of the opponent's defensive reaction.

3 - Ripostes from long distance

These are executed with a step forward lunge or with a flèche.

1) Whether simple direct, indirect or compound they must be preceded by opposition parries so as to avoid the stop hit on the step forward.

2) Direct or indirect ripostes can be executed with a flèche with much less risk. The flèche allows a fencing time to be gained.

4 - Ripostes at close range after a parry with a step forward

These are executed after parries taken with a step forward against an opponent who does not return to guard. Always executed after a parry with opposition, they are direct or indirect, or by disengagement from high line to low line or vice versa. The extremely reduced distance which separates the fencers does not permit complicated movements of the point.

Ripostes executed after the ceding parry, by their technical execution, places the fencers in identical conditions.

B - Counter ripostes

The tactical principles developed for the different ripostes remain valid for counter-ripostes. However, different techniques of execution give them particular tactical advantages.

These reside in the length and width of the parry that justify the premature extension of the weapon arm.

- 1) The parry is taken with the arm 3/4 extended so as to take the opponent's blade as early as possible and prevent the riposte from getting too close during the execution of the parry.
- 2) The arm 3/4 extended only requires a minimum lateral movement of the hand to close the threatened line, this being a function of the cone of projection of the parry.
- 3) The point of the weapon has only a short distance to cover to reach the target. The counter-riposte is therefore capable of great speed.

C - Use of ripostes and counter-ripostes

- 1) The ripostes and counter-ripostes *tac au tac* are generally preceded by lateral or diagonal parries. They are preferably used at short distance and the parry is executed in the final part of the attack.

2) Ripostes or counter-ripostes with broken times are executed after having fixed or wrapped up the opponent's blade with a parry, the intensity of which forces the opponent to return to defensive actions. This denies him the possibility of a remise which can gain a fencing time on the execution of ripostes or counter ripostes with broken time.

These ripostes and counter-ripostes are preferably executed on the opponent's return to guard, when the fencer is unbalanced with only one contact point on the ground. They are directed into the line left open, either with a lunge or a flèche.

While it is recommended to vary the parries, it is essential to vary the ripostes and counter-ripostes. Executed by reflex after the same parries, they are quickly perceived by the opponent and offer him the opportunity to easily execute counter-ripostes with second intention.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

Only the general faults relative to the technique of the riposte or counter-riposte are discussed here. Those relevant to attacks executed at varying distances have already been discussed in the preceding chapters.

- 1) *Hand lower than the point*
Leads to a lack of precision.
- 2) *Hand in insufficient supination*
Hampers lateral and vertical precision.
- 3) *Not respecting the straight line*
Prolongs the duration of execution. The angle formed by the arm and the blade reduces the length of the riposte or provokes a lateral displacement of the point which impedes precision.
- 4) *Withdrawal of the arm in the execution of the riposte*
This fault is found in ripostes by disengagement or compound ripostes and allows the opponent to easily gain a fencing time when executing a remise.

- 5) *Hasty extension of the arm in the compound riposte*
Increases the difficulty of deceiving the parry, the blade often hits the opponent's arm.
- 6) *Hasty extension of the arm in the riposte with taking of the blade*
Causes insufficient dominance of the blade, the blade risks escaping and makes correct and precise execution impossible.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is rare to find fencers who, after an attack, possess excellent defensive reflexes in the low line. It is therefore advantageous whenever possible, but without overdoing it, to riposte in the low line. To be effective the ripostes or counter-ripostes must hit in the last few centimetres of the target area, so as to not be deflected or taken onto off-target areas by high line parries taken with the hand low.

The nature of the riposte, as well as the target to be reached, determines the position of the hand which can be in either supination or pronation.

The distance separating the fencers does not always facilitate the execution of compound ripostes. The feint of the point which provokes the anticipated defensive reflex must be sufficiently rapid to compensate for its lack of length. The extension of the arm is executed simultaneously with the deceiving of the blade. The covering movements (lifting and opposition) are often only of secondary interest in the riposte and counter-riposte.

In Foil, due to its conventions, the right of riposte is given as soon as there is blade contact, therefore it is of no use taking into account the remise when the parry executed as a beat is followed by a riposte (either directly or indirectly). The ever possible remise is systematically a false action. Certain fencers maintain that if the riposte passes or is flat, the covering movements of the remise allow the fencer to profit. In this case an improvement in the technical execution of ripostes and counter-ripostes is preferable and more sure.

Some fencers riposte with slight angulation particularly on the inside line when they are same handed and in the top line when they are opposite handed. Ripostes and counter-ripostes by taking of the blade are commonly used in electric Foil. They allow the fencer to maintain blade contact, but although they give protection from remises they are executed at long distance. They can be used to

reinforce the parry since they exaggerate the opponent's reaction. In this case they should be followed by indirect ripostes.

In electric foil, there is no value in multiplying the feints of ripostes or overusing indirect ripostes which leave the way open for the remise and the stop hit. However, the opponent's game must guide the choice of parries and ripostes; it is always preferable to continue the fencing phrase and to counter-riposte judiciously rather than to attempt a remise which, when it is badly judged, does not have any chance of success.

A fencing phrase consists of several counter-ripostes and is often badly analysed. On the piste it is common to hear talk of first, second, third riposte. There is only one riposte - if it is parried and followed by a new offensive action it is then called a *counter-riposte*. In addition, it must not be confused with the *redoublement of the riposte* which can only be executed on an opponent who does not counter-riposte.

Note: The fencer who parries the attack and ripostes, executes the second, fourth, sixth etc counter-riposte. The fencer who attacks executes the first, third, fifth etc counter-riposte.

VII- TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The teaching recommendations in this chapter follow on from those discussed in the chapter on parries. The speed and precision of the riposte depends on the quality of the parry and on the Master's invitation or reaction. To get the pupil to riposte or counter-riposte the Master must:

- 1) For a direct riposte or counter-riposte make a definite invitation to open the line.
- 2) For an indirect riposte or counter-riposte, react and cover in the desired line with a predominance of the point.
- 3) For a compound riposte or counter-riposte, react and cover in the desired line with a predominance of the point and then take a classical parry without facilitating the *trompement*.
- 4) For a riposte or counter-riposte with taking of the blade, keep the arm extended and the blade against the base of the pupil's blade without excessive pressure.

5) When the riposte or counter-riposte is executed with a lunge, with a step forward lunge, or with a flèche, maintain the arm extended and make the invitation or covering in the desired line during the return to guard.

The Master must require the execution of the parry as a function of the riposte asked for.

E.G. The riposte by counter-disengagement must be preceded by a parry that is sufficiently accentuated to *provoke* the Master's change of line.

The notion of distance plays an important role in the execution of counter-ripostes. To this end, and more particularly when they are executed *on the lunge*, the Master must watch that the pupil meticulously maintains the rear foot flat without sliding and not exaggeratedly lean the bust forward during the final part of the attack. These two faults hamper the precision of the counter-riposte which passes or is flat.

The Master must train his pupil to counter-riposte:

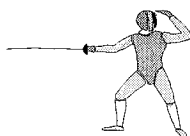
- in the on guard position
- staying on the lunge
- while lunging
- with the flèche.

To get the pupil to counter-riposte the Master must:

- parry the riposte or the attack at the very last moment
- riposte or counter-riposte *with precision and with the every intention of hitting*
- be at the *correct distance*.

The Master must separate the parry from the riposte when he asks for a counter-riposte in the line of the parry, in order to obtain a clear and firm action. This presents a certain difficulty in the line of sixte, because the blades tend to remain in contact. In this case the Master can leave the blade by slightly displacing the hand, but he must always give his riposte or counter-riposte direct, without vertical movement of the arm and the point.

The study of counter-ripostes must correspond to the realities of the bout. It is therefore not useful to repeat too many of them in the lesson; on the other hand they must be varied, as for the parries and ripostes which precede them. As the pupil progresses the Master must call on his technique (hand, hand-eye coordination, appreciation of distance, reflexes) and, while varying his actions, develop his defensive system in quality, precision and speed.



CHAPTER XIV

FEINTS OF THE ATTACK AND COMPOUND ATTACKS

1 - DEFINITIONS

A - The feint of the attack

The feint of the attack is the simulation of an attack intending to provoke a parry in order to be able to deceive it.

B - Compound attack

The attack is compound when it deceives one or several parries provoked by one or several feints.

Note: *A deception: is the action of withdrawing the point from the opponent's parry in the final part of the feint.*

Translator's note: *trompement is the deception of a parry.*

II - CLASSIFICATION

According to the opponent's anticipated reactions, feints of the attack vary in their technical execution and are classified into several categories:

1) *The fast feint*

Consists of the fast and incomplete execution of the feint to provoke an expected parry.

E.G. The feint of the disengagement inside can be replaced by a feint in which the point does not move from the low line and still provoke the parry of quarte.

2) *The combined feint*

Consists of reinforcing the previous feint with different actions on the blade to make the opponent react and more easily provoke a parry.

E.G. Feint of the disengagement inside, beat disengage to the top line.

3) *The feint with the foot raised*

Consists of beginning the execution of the lunge before the final part of the feint. The movement of the attacker's front foot almost certainly provokes a defensive reaction from the opponent.

Note: The feint with the foot raised can also be executed with a flèche; it is the movement of the rear foot in this case that provokes the parry.

The feints can be simple or compound and are executed in all the lines.

4) *Flicked feint*

Is only executed from a position of absence of blade and only for a straight hit. It consists of a projection of the weapon arm as fast as possible, the point threatening an open line.

5) *The feints of the simple attack:*

These correspond to the simple attacks:

- feint of a straight hit
- feint of a disengagement
- feint of a cutover.

6) *The feints of the compound attack*

There is an infinite variety of compound feints

- the most common combinations are:
 - feint of a one-two
 - feint of a doublement
 - feint low, high etc.

III - TACTICAL STUDY

A - Description

1 - THE FEINTS

a) *Feints of the simple attack*

The feint of the simple attack is technically executed in the same way as the simple attack for which it must be mistaken.

b) *Feints of the compound attack*

The feint of the compound attack is the combination of several feints of the simple attack.

2 - THE COMPOUND ATTACK

The compound attack consists of the preliminary execution of one or several feints of the weapon arm followed by the movements necessary to withdraw the point from the opponent's defensive reactions while lunging.

Note: In general only the final deception is executed with a lunge or a flèche.

B - Execution

Whether they are simple or compound the feints of attacks must be mistaken for the attack itself in order to provoke the expected defensive reactions. To this end they must possess the same qualities as simple attacks: timing, speed, acceleration and precision.

The position of the point is of vital importance in the final part of the feint as it must provoke the desired parry, and also allow it to be withdrawn as easily as possible from the parry. Since conventions of Foil give the immediate right of riposte to the parrier if the blade is met, it is therefore indispensable to assure the trompement of the parries with respect to the following technical principals in the execution of feints:

- Distance the point from the opponent's blade and hand when the trompement moves forward in the opposite direction to the parry (lateral, diagonal, semi-circular).

- Bring the point closer to the opponent's blade and hand when the trompement must go in the same direction and precede the parry (circular).

In general, to easily provoke one of the following reactions and deceive a parry the feint must be executed in one of the following ways:

1) *For a lateral parry*

Position the point at the height of the opponent's hand and sufficiently distant from it.

2) *For a circular parry*

Position the point above or below and close to the hand of the opponent according to the guard position.

3) *For a diagonal parry*

Position the point lower or higher than the hand according to the position of the guard and sufficiently distant from it.

4) *For a semi-circular parry*

Position the point lower or higher than the hand according to the position of guard and close to it.

In the execution of the trompement of the parry, the point *must always progress* towards the aimed target without wavering. The trompement that is executed too early and laterally gives the opponent the possibility of catching and deflecting the blade. When the attack consists of several feints, their execution should progressively penetrate into the opponent's defensive system without giving him the opportunity to catch the blade. As in the execution of simple attacks, the speed of the feint must be progressive in order to avoid triggering an early or fast defensive reflex, which is sometimes difficult to deceive. The speed of the parry provoked in this manner corresponds to that of the feint, and facilitates the trompement.

Moreover, when the feints of the attack are compound, they are generally executed by progressively increasing the speed (acceleration). It is often wise to vary the starting speed of feints, as too fast an execution startles the opponent's hand, whereas a change of rhythm in the final part can leave him powerless to react in time.

Except for feints with the foot lifted which naturally provoke a parry, the distance separating the fencers requires the simultaneous use of actions with the aim of:

with the aim of:

- 1) *Reinforcing the feinting action*
The extension of the weapon arm alone is not sufficient to worry the opponent.
- 2) *Positioning the point*
In most cases it only triggers the parry when it is sufficiently close to the target - approximately 20 centimetres.
- 3) *To gain distance*
When the distance between the fencers is too large.

These actions or preparations can be, according to the situation:

- 1) *Displacements: (step or jump)*
Allows the fencer to place himself in distance while giving more reality to the feint.
- 2) *Half-feints*
Can be mistaken for the attack itself and allow the feint to be lodged very deeply into the opponent's defence.
- 3) *Tapping the foot*
The suddenness of which can weaken the opponent's confidence.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

A - Fast feints

Fast feints are used on nervous fencers or on those who lack experience. The slightest displacement of the blade and the point triggers defensive reflexes. It is therefore not necessary to overly pronounce the threat of the feints. Reinforced with "appels" (tapping of the feet) or other brisk or noisy movements, they are even more effective.

B - Combined feints

Combined feints are recommended on calm fencers for whom the well coordinated defence does not start until the last moment. In general, these experienced fencers possess a good hand and a sure eye. The first feint has the aim of lodging the point and the action of the blade that follows makes the opponent react more surely. The danger the new feint presents, together with being reinforced in its progression, triggers the parry. Combined feints are often used with a half-lunge and although this

method of executing the first feint is common it is not without disadvantages. In effect it exposes the fencer using them without discretion to actions on the blade that are easier for the opponent to execute because the feints lack continuity.

C - Feints with the foot lifted

The feints with the foot lifted are very effective. The first feint is executed when the front foot starts to move increasing the probability of being mistaken for a simple attack. When executed while taking into consideration the opponent's favoured defensive reflex, it nearly always triggers the expected parry. Generally the attack consists of only one feint as it requires much judgement, sureness of eye, good coordination and finger dexterity to deceive the parry.

D - Flicked feints

From the undeniable evolution which is the result of the electrification of Foil comes the use of flicked feints in the bout. There are two principal reasons for their appearance:

- The absence of the permanent engagement or the difficulty which the foilist meets in finding the opponent's blade justifies the use of the flicked feint to provoke the defensive reaction.

- The fencers who are out of distance can no longer protect their steps with engagements, change of engagements or double engagements. In combining the displacement with the flicked feint, of which the progressive speed simulates the start of the attack with a lunge, they more readily trigger the parry and are less vulnerable to counter-offensive actions.

The use of these flicked feints is recommended on opponents who flee from all blade contact and from this fact adopt a low position of guard, in general octave. The flicked feint that displays qualities of precision, acceleration and timing invariably provokes the defensive reflex. Few fencers dare counter-attack an opponent whose point, in line, progresses at increasing speed. Used on opponents with a low line guard, they offer the opportunity to execute a compound attack by:

Feint of straight hit - disengage above.

Feint of straight hit - disengage low with hand

Feint of the straight hit - cutover.

It is more rare to find foilists with a classical high guard (sixte) who avoid or do not seek blade contact. But sometimes on these fencers the flicked feint by straight hit low, more or less with the hand in seconde proves effective. They trigger the parry of octave and allow the *trompement* into the high line by disengagement.

This compound attack is particularly recommended on the opponent's attacks by preparation executed with a step. Following the instant that the feint is launched, it can sometimes be similar to a compound counter-attack.

This compound action in Foil, used very commonly at present, is identified by its rhythm, its coordination with displacements or even by its preliminary preparation, to compound attacks in Sabre.

E - Tactical use of the feint

In addition to the general technical principles, the feint can vary according to the opponent and the circumstances of the bout. In certain cases, the displacement of the point can be increased:

1) *To provoke a large movement of the hand in the first parry and consequently delay the final parry.*

2) *In certain cases to facilitate the *trompement* of the parry:*

E.G. To execute the compound attack "feint of disengagement inside high, outside low", it is important to present the point in the direction of the target during the feint, but quite high, to force the opponent to take a parry of quarte while lifting the hand, making the parries of septime and octave difficult.

When the feint is preceded by a cutover (over the opponent's blade) it must also be placed sufficiently high to deceive a lateral parry. The extended position of the weapon arm increases the time of execution of the cut-over and makes the deception difficult, in particular on parries executed with the point quite high. Compound attacks need to be introduced into the game of a fencer who is dominated by pure speed; often his simple actions are doomed to failure. However, he must not multiply the feints and become vulnerable to counter-attacks.

Often only one feint possessing sound technical qualities and executed with timing is sufficient to provoke the desired defensive movement.

The opponent's defensive reflexes can be exploited. Some are specific, especially in technical execution - others are common to a good number of fencers. Generally after a circular parry the opponent executes a simple parry, or conversely, after a lateral parry a circular one. This method is common in left handed fencers who often execute quarte and counter quarte with panache. Between same handed fencers, all these feints are effective, however, between opposite handed fencers, those provoking the parry of quarte are recommended. The left hander uses this parry by reflex, thus offering the possibility of carrying out compound attacks that finish in the high and low outside lines, lines that he defends with difficulty.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

1) *Insufficiently pronounced feint*

Results from an error of distance or from the incomplete extension of the weapon arm; the feint does not provoke the parry.

2) *Hand in incomplete supination*

Does not allow the *trompement* to be carried out solely by finger action, and therefore lacks indispensable speed and precision.

3) *Point exterior to the target area*

Does not justify a parry from the opponent, and results from a bad position of the hand and the weapon arm.

4) *Insufficient acceleration in the *trompement**

Comes from a lack of balance and co-ordination which does not allow for a good change of rhythm. The attack is easily deflected by a second parry.

5) *Delayed leg action*

The opponent is at ease for parrying the final part of the attack, as the *trompement* occurs before the lunge.

6) *Premature leg action*

Hampers the action of the weapon arm in the *trompement*, the feint does not attract the parry and the attack often ends up in a closed line.

7) *Extension of the arm at close range (while riposting)*

Makes the *trompement* extremely difficult and sometimes prevents it, according to the line in which the point must be directed. Prevents the point passing in the desired line, as it often meets the opponent's guard or arm.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Certain abbreviations are used to name the compound attacks. The most common are determined in the following way:

- 1) When the attack consists of a feint of a disengagement to deceive a direct parry, it is called a *one-two*.
- 2) When the attack consists of two feints to deceive two direct parries, it is called a *one-two-three*.
- 3) When the attack consists of a feint of a disengagement to deceive a circular parry, it is called a *doublement*.
- 4) When the attack consists of a feint of a straight hit or of a cutover or of a feint of disengagement, from high line to low line or vice-versa, it takes the name of the corresponding movements and lines.
- 5) To simplify the naming conventions, the movement that deceives a counter parry is called a *counter disengagement*.

The technical execution of the feint of the attack must respect the same principles as those given for the simple attacks. Offensive actions at middle or long distance allow the arm to be completely extended. At close range, that is to say with the riposte or counter-riposte, the closer opponent's defensive action imposes a particular execution to compound actions. To be effective the following must occur:

- Parry the attack with *an appropriate parry, in order to provoke the desired reaction from the opponent*.
- Place the feint, *arm shortened*, in the line thus opened by a *rapid action of the fingers* without displacing the hand.

- *Deceive the opponent's parry by extending the arm.*

When the compound riposte is executed on an opponent who immediately returns to guard after the failure of his attack, it is often made with the foot lifted. In this case, the feint is a function of the speed of the opponent's reaction and generally of his favourite parries.

In electric Foil much importance is attached to compound attacks finishing in the low line since their execution consists of one fencing time less. In ordinary Foil they benefit from the same tactical advantages but human judgement does not always allow the recognition of the validity of actions with certainty since they are often hidden and placed at the limit of the non-valid target area. Electrification resolves the problem of validity of hits in the low line, but to a certain degree impedes them. The weight of the electric weapon and the inertia of the point does not facilitate *trompements* and reduces their speed.

VII - APPROPRIATE DEFENCE FOR COMPOUND ATTACKS

The technique relative to defence in general has been discussed in a preceding chapter. The defensive actions discussed in this chapter are of a tactical order and are classed in two distinct categories.

A - *Reflex parries*

Used when the opponent has the initiative, they only have value in their technique, mechanism and speed. They consist of catching the blade *in the final action* in the line in which the attack finishes, and preferably by moving out of distance.

B - *Premeditated defence*

Premeditated defence gets its effectiveness from the *value of judgement*, and offers the following possibilities:

- 1) Take a *final parry* in the line in which the attacks end after having avoided doing the parries that the opponent tries to provoke.
- 2) Execute a *time of interception* with a half lunge in the line in which the compound attack must pass with the final *trompement*.

in the line in which the compound attack must pass with the final *trompement*.

- 3) Execute a *time of opposition* with a half lunge in the line in which the attack finishes.
- 4) Gain a *fencing time* before the final part of the attack, preferably with a half-lunge.
- 5) Execute a *stop hit* if the compound attack is executed with a step forward and lunge, preferably in a low line and with a half-lunge.

VIII-TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

In the beginning, the execution of compound attacks demands a progression in the different movements of the weapon arm and legs. Before seeking speed and coordination, the Master must first require that:

- 1) The *feint* be done without unnecessary displacement of the point and hand, with the hand in complete supination, the arm totally extended and the point placed as a function of the parry to be deceived.
- 2) The *trompement* be executed by the action of the fingers, without movement of the arm. Movement of the point depends on the target to reach or of a new parry to deceive.
- 3) The lunge be executed correctly.

As the pupil progresses the Master must develop the coordination of the movements of the weapon arm and the legs until he obtains perfect progression of the attack. This can only be achieved if he:

- 1) Covers *without roughness* to get the pupil to execute the *feint*.
- 2) Takes *the parry in the final part of the complete extension* of the pupil's weapon arm.
- 3) Gives *the speed to his parry* that corresponds to the speed of execution by the pupil (*trompement*) and always seeks to increase the pupil's speed.

The Master progressively tries to make the

pupil deceive the blade at the instant that his front foot leaves the ground.

When the Master trains an experienced fencer possessing excellent technique, he must give the utmost realism to his defensive actions, all the while teaching the pupil to deceive his parry during the final part of the lunge. The only variations are in the speed of the movements he must respond to, namely: the speed of the *feint*, the *trompement* and the lunge.

The Master must however watch that the pupil does *not exaggeratedly* lift the front foot during the lunge in order to delay contact with the ground and thus increase the time of suspension to facilitate the *trompement*. This fault sometimes occurs and in such cases it is preferable to work on the speed of the hand.

The compound actions are executed at varying distances, and the Master must teach them progressively taking into account the following difficulties:

- 1) At middle distance where the coordination is practically the same as for the simple attacks.
- 2) At long distance where the *trompement* is facilitated but the coordination of the movements of the weapon arm and displacements is more difficult, especially when seeking a change in rhythm.
- 3) At close range, where the difficulties of the *trompement* are increased by the closeness of the defensive movements and the obstacles that the hand, forearm and weapon of the Master become.

In the execution of all the compound attacks, the Master must watch that the pupil deceives the parries with a minimum displacement of the point and tries to reach the target by the shortest route.

Although it may not be desirable in the bout to multiply the *feints*, during the lesson the Master must make the pupil execute compound attacks requiring two, three or four deceptions of different parries. This is in order to develop in the pupil the necessary dexterity, eye and skill and get him used to maintaining the arm completely extended. These exercises can be combined with one or several displacements forward by the pupil or the Master. When the execution is perfect, the Master tries to develop the timing and eye. He preferably chooses simple exercises combined with a step forward,

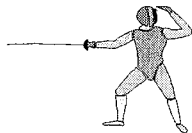
which facilitate the *trompement*, then he gives the speed and size to his parries that corresponds to the speed of execution by the pupil.

For example:

a) Feint of the disengagement inside with

a step, deceive the parry of quarte or the counter of sixte-above.

b) Feint of a straight hit with a step, deceive the parry of quarte below or the counter of sixte above.



CHAPTER XV

THE SUCCESSIVE PARRIES

I - DEFINITIONS

A - The parries are successive when they are composed of two or several consecutive parries.

B - The feint of the parry is the imitation of a parry designed to provoke a compound attack, in order to exploit it.

II - CLASSIFICATION

The classification of successive parries is determined by the execution of the second or the last parry:

- double parries
- mixed parries
- combined parries.

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

Whatever the combinations of successive parries used, execution of each one of them must respect the technical principles defined in the chapter on simple parries.

Only those principles specific to the successive parries are dealt with here.

A - Basic technical principles

- 1) Coordinate the second or following parries with a step back to facilitate catching the attack.
- 2) Follow any lateral parry with a circular parry in order to thwart the trompement.
- 3) Follow any circular parry with a lateral parry, which hinders the progression of the attack.
- 4) For identical reasons, follow diagonal parries with circular parries and semi-circular parries with lateral parries.
- 5) In the execution of the parries the technical principles defined in the paragraphs corresponding to the simple parries remain valid.

B - Description of the successive parries

1) *Double parries*

Consists of two identical types of parries taken in the same direction or not: lateral, circular, semi-circular, etc.

E.G.

From the sixte position, parry quarte and sixte.

From the sixte position, parry two counter of sixte.

From the sixte position, parry octave and sixte.

2) *Mixed parries*

Consist of two different parries taken in a variety of directions: diagonal and lateral, circular and semi-circular etc.

E.G.

From the position of octave, parry quarte and counter of quarte.

From the position of sixte, parry quarte and octave.

From the position of sixte, parry counter of sixte and quarte.

3) *Combined parries*

Consists of two or several parries of varied execution and direction:

E.G.

From the position of sixte, two counters of sixte-septime.

sixte-septime.

From the position of sixte, quarte-counter of quarte-octave.

From the position of octave, sixte-octave-counter of octave.

C - Execution of successive parries

The execution of the second parry depends on the technical quality of the first. If the defensive action consists of several parries, the technical quality of the last parry is always closely linked to the execution of the preceding parries.

The last action of the successive parry can be executed, as has been defined in the corresponding chapter on simple parries, with opposition, as a beat, or ceding.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

Successive parries give the foilist two distinct tactical possibilities:

-To parry a compound attack in the line in which it is presented.

-To provoke and exploit the opponent's compound attack (second intention).

A - Successive parries on a compound attack

Successive parries allow the fencer to catch the blade that penetrates into the guard after having deceived one or several parries.

It remains the only defensive method that as a reflex can tempt the opponent to attack. In no case can the counter-attack, carried out after a first defensive reaction, gain a fencing time before the compound attack reaches its target.

THE SECOND PARRY

1) *Vary the parry*

So that the attempted *trompement* of the second parry occurs in a different direction, which accentuates the difficulty for the attacker and avoids the *reflex trompement* in the final part of the development.

2) *Choice of the parry*

Is of fundamental importance and limits the progression of the attack. In general, the second parry must deflect the point from the target as

directly as possible. For this reason it is recommended to use, in the final part of the defensive action, lateral or diagonal parries.

3) *Reinforce the defensive action*

By coordinating the second parry with a small step back, and allowing the riposte with a step forward. When the second or the last parry is circular or semi-circular, the step back becomes indispensable to counteract the inevitable progression of the opponent's attack, since the point is not deflected from the target until the final part of the parry.

B - Use of the parry in second intention

The competitive foilist uses the feint of the parry as an effective tactical method. With this intention he deliberately lets his point "be taken up" in the opponent's feints, while maintaining his distance. The difficulty of this tactic resides in the natural aspect that the parrier must maintain in his defensive reactions in order that they do not have the air of being an obvious trap.

Several possibilities exist which hinder the opponent's defensive action thus provoked:

- 1) Attack on the opponent's preparation (feint) preferably with an attack on the blade if this preparation is carried out with a step forward.
- 2) Counter attack with a half-lunge at the moment that the opponent loses equilibrium, that is during the short instant that precedes the last *trompement*, by executing, either a stop hit, or an interception in time; this last action is more difficult to carry out.
- 3) Change the parry that the opponent expects to see taken, which prevents the *trompement* and then riposte at the slightest contact with the opponent's blade.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults mentioned in the chapter corresponding to the simple parries remain valid. Only those faults related to the succession of two or several parries are discussed here.

1) *First parry exaggeratedly out of the line*

Results from insufficient work in the lesson; the hand is not controlled and is dragged out of line at the instant of the *trompement*.

2) *Delay of the blade in the final parry*

Consecutive to the preceding fault. The blade of the parrier has too much distance to cover to catch the opponent's blade. The compound attack or the *trompement* of the last parry are thus facilitated.

3) *No blocking of the first parry*

Comes from the absence of a point of support that the parrier expected to find until the *trompement* at the last moment. It causes an exaggerated amplitude in the defensive actions that follow.

4) *Bad choice of the final parry*

Comes from uncontrolled technique which facilitates the progression of the attack.

5) *Lack of variety in defensive reflexes*

Comes from insufficient practice. This will be rapidly discovered and exploited by an opponent who is able to carry out, with relative safety, compound attacks consisting of two feints.

6) *Insufficient displacements*

Comes from neglecting the physical part of training, hampers the coordination of the retreat and the defensive actions and makes the final parry on the compound attack exaggeratedly difficult.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The blocking of the first or of each parry preceding the final parry is particularly important. The speed of execution of the following parry depends upon it.

The absence of contact of the opponent's blade resulting from the *trompement* of the parry generally leads the hand and blade of the parrier out of line. The next movement requires an exaggerated amplitude that the opponent exploits, either hitting before the second parry closes the new line, or deceiving it easily and thus maintaining a clear advance on the third parry.

Left handed foilists often have the reflex of the successive parries of quarte and counter of quarte when their first and favourite parry is deceived. It is sometimes even very difficult to distinguish the execution of two parries in this successive defence. The parry of quarte is taken with only a slight displacement of the hand, while the blade is exaggeratedly led outwards and downwards already beginning the counter of quarte.

The dominant visual impression is that of a

counter of quarte taken in the position of sixte. This defensive reaction makes these fencers vulnerable to compound attacks that finish high or low by deceiving the counter of quarte. These fencers require excellent control of the parry of circular quarte so that they can follow it up with a parry of sixte if it is deceived. Often the exaggerated movement of the point outwards makes the natural execution of a second lateral parry impossible.

A lot of work is also necessary to coordinate the step back with the second parry as the natural reaction of a fencer is to begin the displacement backwards at the beginning of the opponent's attack with a step forward.

Retreat executed too early

If the retreat is coordinated with the first parry, it is carried out on the opponent's feint. The attacker has not yet started his lunge and therefore has sufficient balance either to execute a second step or to deceive with a *flèche*, which annuls the effect of the retreat.

Retreat coordinated with the second parry

It is executed on the final parry of the compound attack at the instant that the opponent regains contact with the ground in the lunge and can no longer modify the length of his attack. It gives the parrier the necessary security; its calculated size often allows a riposte with the aid of a simple advance of the front foot.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The successive parries are commonly used in the bout, as few fencers have the qualities necessary to win a bout only by using simple attacks. The recommended defensive action to cause compound attacks to fail, without taking into account an error of judgement, consists of the calculated use of successive parries.

Without neglecting the teaching recommendations discussed in the chapter on simple parries, the constant attention and efforts of the Master must be brought to the blocking of the first parry and all the parries preceding the final part of the defensive action.

This blocking dictates the quality and effectiveness of the successive parry. To this effect the Master must:

1) *At the beginning of the invitation*

Leave a slight contact in the first parry. The point of support stops the pupil's blade being led out of line.

2) *At a more advanced technical stage*

Deceive the parry while constantly correcting the width of the pupil's blade movements and requiring him not to begin the final parry until the Master's front foot begins to move in the development. The Master changes the rhythm of this attack either by linking the feint to the *trompement* and the lunge, or by pausing between the *trompement* and the lunge. This procedure allows the necessary corrections to be made.

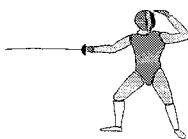
3) *In the training lesson*

The Master must occasionally transform the exercise of successive parries into reflex

exercises of simple or successive parries. To this end, he attacks with simple movements and sometimes deceives the parry asked for; the pupil must protect the newly threatened line with the aid of another parry. According to the ability of the pupil, he can again deceive without warning the second parry and require a third one. Each parry must be followed by an immediate riposte at the slightest blade contact.

The Master then asks the pupil to vary the successive parries that he deceives and ensures that their succession remains logical and effective.

He does not neglect the successive parries that finish in the low line, even though they are less natural. The frequency of the compound attacks finishing in the low line justifies their practice.



CHAPTER XVI

ATTACKS ON THE BLADE AND THE COULE

I - DEFINITION

Attacks on the blade are actions that are more or less pronounced and which are executed on the opponent's blade with the aim of preparing and facilitating offensive actions through the reactions that they provoke.

II - CLASSIFICATION

There are three attacks on the blade:

- the pressure
- the beat
- the froissement.

THE PRESSURE

I - DEFINITION

The pressure is a pushing movement that is more or less pronounced, executed on the opponent's blade after a previous engagement.

II - TECHNICAL STUDY

The pressure can be executed starting from any engagement corresponding to the different fencing positions. However its practical usefulness limits this study to the pressure executed with the hand in supination.

The pressure is executed with a contraction of the fingers on the handle and a light action of the wrist in the same direction. The displacement of the blade thus obtained transmits a push of a desired intensity through the point of contact of the blades onto the opponent's blade.

In the positions of sixte and octave, the action of the fingers and the wrist is reinforced by a contraction of the forearm, justified by the blade position which is in the same plane as the arm.

The perfect technical execution is naturally linked to that of the engagement which invariably precedes the pressure. It therefore requires:

- 1) Sufficient *perpendicularity* of the blades.
- 2) A point of contact situated at about two thirds of the way up the blade and on the same part of the opponent's blade or a part that is slightly weaker.
- 3) That the contact is with the edge of the blades.
- 4) That the pressure be *lateral* without extension of the arm during its execution.
- 5) That the action be *firm and blocked* whatever the force given to it.

III - TACTICAL STUDY

The pressure can and must be executed according to the tactical necessities of the bout starting from

different fencing positions whatever the position of the opponent. Because it is invariably preceded by blade contact, it is executed in the following cases:

- 1) When the blades are in permanent contact, that is to say on an opponent who deliberately gives the blade.
- 2) Immediately after the engagement, a change of engagement, a double engagement, etc.
- 3) From the engagement, or a change of engagement etc. by the opponent.
- 4) Executed after the opponent's pressure, it takes the name of *counter-pressure*.

The general aim of all attacks on the blade is to facilitate the attacks. According to its intensity, the pressure has four particular aims, which are, in order of practical use:

A - To provoke a reaction

The pressure is precise, lively and must leave the opponent's blade briskly and provoke a reaction in the line in which it occurs in order to develop the attack in another line.

The attack must therefore be indirect and executed during the reaction which quite often takes the fencer's hand out of line and delays the parry. This type of pressure can equally be followed by compound attacks without, however, overdoing the number of feints.

B - Fix the hand

The pressure seems to be executed in a negligent manner pushing the opponent's blade without roughness so as not to provoke a reaction. It can be repeated several times in order to better leave the opponent in doubt as to the action to follow, which is generally a direct attack or a disengagement from high line to low line or vice-versa.

C - Open the line

The pressure is firm and progressive, quite accentuated but executed without roughness by maintaining the opponent's blade in a way that opens the line without provoking an immediate covering action or change of engagement. It is followed by direct attacks, exploiting the momentary absence of reactions.

D - Provoke a change of engagement

In this particular case, the pressure is a veritable prolonging of the engagement and is intimately linked to it. It is executed nearly exclusively in the high line. This authoritative and strong pressure, while being progressive, is exercised on the opponent's blade in such a way that it drags the blade towards the exterior and downwards, in order to provoke a change of engagement and exploit it.

THE BEAT

I - DEFINITION

The beat is a striking movement that is more or less forceful, executed with the blade on the opponent's blade.

II - TECHNICAL STUDY

The beat can be executed in all the fencing positions, however its practical usefulness limits its execution to positions with the hand in supination. The beat is executed by a sharp contraction of the fingers on the handle, accentuated in the same direction by a wrist movement to strike the opponent's blade. The displacement of the forearm, which precedes it, is a function of the

position occupied and the line in which it is made. The intensity of the strike at the point of blade contact depends on the speed and the force used.

The execution of beats is influenced by the muscles used. Therefore the beats of quarte and septime are more natural and easier to execute than those of sixte and octave. Nevertheless beats, contrary to the pressure, do not require an initial engagement, which makes them easier to use.

To the technical conditions of the execution of the pressure add the following:

- 1) *A predominance in the displacement of the blade* in seeking contact with the opponent's blade.
- 2) *A very slight rotation* of the wrist in the direction of the beat.
- 3) *A minimum displacement of the hand* when this is rendered necessary by the position of the opponent's blade.
- 4) *Blocking* the displacement of the blade and hand in order to *avoid* being taken out of line, while maintaining a threatening point.

III - TACTICAL STUDY

The beat must be executed starting from all the fencing positions whatever position the opponent is in. This displacement of the blade and the hand can be lateral, diagonal, semi-circular or circular.

Well executed beats are difficult to derobe. However, those executed starting from a premeditated engagement can be easier because of the absence of blade which, to a certain degree, can be exploited by the opponent. The preparation of the beat or the beat itself can be deliberately executed badly in order to provoke the opponent's offensive action - offering the opportunity for parries and ripostes with second intention.

The beat, like the pressure, can obtain diverse reactions from the opponent. According to the

intensity applied, the following reactions are the most common:

- 1) *Opening the line*
In this case the beat is forceful and deflects the opponent's blade, taking it out of line. It is always followed by direct attacks to exploit the momentary deflection of the blade and of the weakening of the opponent's hand. The attack can be carried out from high line to low line or vice versa without being hampered by the opponent's reaction.
- 2) *Get a reaction*
The sharp, clear and lighter beat provokes a displacement of the hand and the blade in the line in which it occurred.

It allows for indirect and compound attacks of one feint and interferes with defensive actions but does not impede counter-offensive actions, which it sometimes attracts (counter-attack into the beat). If it is executed too strongly, it forces the opponent's hand into a disordered defence that is difficult to deceive.

- 3) *Fix the hand*
The beat is very light and sharp but without any roughness. It can be doubled and tripled. It must immobilise the opponent's hand by deliberately mastering his reflexes and leaving him in doubt regarding a good defence. The beat is followed by a direct attack or an attack from high line to low line or vice-versa.

THE FROISSEMENT

I - DEFINITION

The froissement is an action that is a combination of both the beat and the pressure, executed with the blade along the whole length of the opponent's blade.

II - TECHNICAL STUDY

The froissement is normally executed in the high line of sixte and quarte, either from a position of absence of blade, or from an engagement.

The froissement is a brisk prolonged friction

which begins at the beginning of the third section of the opponent's blade and is executed by action of the fingers, wrist, forearm and arm to move progressively and rapidly along the length of the opponent's blade. The rotation of the wrist and forearm and the rapid extension of the arm give

great strength to the froissement and allow the opponent's blade to be deflected.

The execution of the froissement nearly always requires a large movement of the hand and the point in order to be able to develop the following attack without a pause. It is indispensable:

- to block the movement and extend the arm.
- to maintain or immediately aim the point in the direction of the desired target.

III - TACTICAL STUDY

The froissement is of only minimal interest from a tactical point of view. Aside from the technical difficulties of its execution, its use is infrequent as a result of the positions adopted in electric Foil. The position with the point lower than or at the height of the hand does not present the best conditions to take and act on the opponent's blade,

while limiting the displacement of the hand and above all of the point.

The froissement can only be followed by a direct attack, as the extension of the arm and the rotation of the movement makes any change of line difficult. As well, in the electric weapon, the delay of the point prevents any eventual derobement. The tactical application of the froissement is greatly reduced by the inconveniences that its use presents:

- 1) The mobility of the opponent's blade, its positions and the distance separating the fencers prevent it being taken and acted upon, even without warning. Attempts to find the blade risk missing it altogether or not being able to master it completely.
- 2) In electric Foil, the inertia of the tip considerably increases the size of the froissement and naturally only has precision relative to the following direct attack.
- 3) The position of the hand in the final part of the

GENERALITIES ON ATTACKS ON THE BLADE

I - TECHNICAL STUDY

The execution and use of attacks on the blade are influenced by the distance which separates the two fencers - it is therefore indispensable to coordinate their execution with displacements.

A - Close range or riposting distance

This is the distance at which to study the action - the arm remains in position or only moves laterally. The pressure or the beat followed by the extension of the arm is used by the Master in exercises for dexterity.

B - Middle or lunging distance

- a) *The pressure*
Whatever the engagement taken, it requires a position that allows the opponent's blade to be met as already described. The complete extension of the weapon arm only occurs after the execution of the pressure, before the beginning of the lunge.

b) The beat

Whichever starting position is adopted, the beat must occur at the moment of blade contact followed by an immediate and complete extension of the weapon arm. These movements must correspond to the moment the front foot starts to move.

C - Large distance or distance of step forward and lunge (flèche)

a) The pressure

The engagement must be combined with the step forward and must meet the opponent's blade simultaneously with the movement of the front foot. The pressure is executed at the moment the back foot lands (ie. when it returns to its correct distance from the front foot). In the

offensive action with a fleche, the engagement requires a greater extension of the weapon arm to meet the opponent's blade under the best conditions.

b) The beat

The beat is executed simultaneously with the back foot landing on the ground (ie when it lands at the correct distance from the front foot). If it is executed with a jump, the beat must be executed simultaneously with the landing of both feet. According to the type of offensive action, step forward and lunge, or flèche, the weapon arm extends in a way that varies appropriate to the distance, to meet the opponent's blade in the best conditions.

D - Attacks on the blade preceding the compound attack

When the attack on the blade, beat or pressure precedes a compound attack, it is done in such a way that it allows the fencer to exploit the opponent's reaction without hindering the trompement, or the parries, during the lunge. The attack on the blade can therefore be executed, during the displacement of either foot, or on the front foot, according to whether the compound attack is composed of one or several feints.

II - TACTICAL STUDY

Generally speaking, attacks on the blade must be used in second intention. This technique consists of immediately following an attack on the blade with a feint in a given line and then to complete the action by developing the attack in another line. Attacks on the blade often produce defensive reflexes that are easy to exploit. However, when they are executed with a step forward, it is necessary that they are coordinated, taking into account the technical execution given in the preceding paragraph, in order to be sure of protecting oneself from a counter-offensive action.

III - FAULTS TO AVOID

The principal faults that occur during the execution of attacks on the blade are the following:

1) Contact occurring on the wrong part of the blade

If it is made on the forte of the opponent's blade, the attack on the blade does not provoke a reaction. Taken on the foible, the blades bend and the provoked reaction is insufficient.

2) No blocking

The attack on the blade is uselessly prolonged to the detriment of the reaction sought. The point is exaggeratedly taken out of the line of or away from the opponent's valid target area.

3) No finger action

The attack on the blade is executed uniquely with the wrist and the forearm, and lacks crispness, it is heavy and provokes bad reactions.

4) Exaggerated size of the beat

The attack on the blade is perceptible and facilitates the derobement.

5) Lack of strength in the execution of the froissement

When the force given to the froissement is not proportional to the resistance to be overcome it does not sufficiently deflect the opponent's blade and takes the hand and point out of line.

6) Momentary pause between the froissement and the attack

Does not allow the fencer to profit from the effect produced and often nullifies the possibility of a hit on the opponent's reaction.

IV - SPECIFIC DEFENSIVE ACTIONS FOR ATTACKS ON THE BLADE

In this paragraph only defensive actions specific to attacks on the blade are discussed and not the offensive actions which follow them. Two defensive actions are to be considered:

A - The reflex defensive action which offers the following possibilities:

- parry the final part of the attack
- use of counter-offensive actions

B - The premeditated defensive action which consists of derobing or hindering the anticipated attack on the blade.

1) On a pressure

- Do not react, which does not lose a fencing time for the parry and disorients the opponent.
- Derobe the engagement, the change of engagement etc., which precedes it, with a half lunge, which allows a fencing time to be gained especially in the case where the opponent continues his attack.

2) On a beat or a froissement

- Completely derobe the beat or the froissement without the slightest contact and always with a half lunge in order to gain a fencing time if the opponent continues his attack.

V - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Attacks on the blade always take the name of the line in which they are executed as well as from the hand position (pronation or supination). If the attacks on the blade with the hand in pronation have not been cited, or developed, it is that:

- 1) They differ very little from the corresponding attacks on the blade with the hand in supination.
- 2) They are not recommended because of the lack of precision which results from this hand position and the bend in the blade is not conducive to obtaining sufficient perpendicularity to the target.

The quality of the opponent's "hand" must determine the choice of attack on the blade, it is recommended:

- to execute beats followed by direct attacks on fencers having a weak hand and inconsistent blade,
- to execute pressures on fencer's having a firm hand, as they react well,
- to preferably use the beat on fencers who keep the point well in line.

It should be noted that it is the most classical fencers and those who possess good, varied technique that most often use the pressure. It requires a good hand, and perfect execution. The beat is used more by fencers who avoid blade contact (engagements, change of engagements etc), which does not allow the use of the pressure. They often adopt a position in which the blade is nearly horizontal.

The froissement is rarely used nowadays. It must be executed in a way that forcefully deflects the opponent's blade without disarming, because frequently the resulting hit is annulled in error by referees. While attacks on the blade facilitate offensive actions, they also facilitate, to a certain degree, ripostes, by obliging the opponent to react

at the moment of the parry, or afterwards, according to the situation. Ripostes after beats are executed in this way, sometimes taking the form of an attack on the blade. On the other hand, the parry followed by a more or less accentuated pressure (executed from stationary position, with a lunge or a flèche) prevents the opponent from doing a remise or a reprise on indirect or compound ripostes.

Taking into account the natural reactions of two opposite handed fencers, it is recommended to use the following attacks on the blade:

- 1) The beat in the inside line which provokes a reaction in the quarte line. For example, beat sixte, disengage.
- 2) The pressure in the high line which equally provokes immediate covering in the sixte line. For example, pressure in quarte, disengage inside or outside etc.
- 3) In the low line one obtains identical reactions by using the beat of octave and the pressure in septime. For example, beat octave, disengage high, pressure septime, disengage high.

VI - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

To be effectively employed in the bout, attacks on the blade must be practiced during lessons. They aid in the development of dexterity and the feeling for the blade, which are indispensable qualities for their execution. Therefore the Master must always include in his lessons exercises (at riposting distance) preceded with beats, pressure, counter-pressure, change of engagement, etc, which have the aim of training the pupil's fingers in the different positions.

It is to be noted that the results obtained depend on the quality of the Master's hand. If the Master cannot devote all the desired time to these exercises, he can place his pupils in pairs taking care to choose, for each pair, one experienced pupil with a well developed hand who can in turn direct the different exercises. While modern fencing sometimes lacks finesse (justified in electric Foil by the weight of the blade, the inertia of the point and the obligation to tape the blade for a third of its length), it nevertheless remains true that many Masters neglect the exercises that develop dexterity

and the strength of the hand. They let their pupils use force which comes from using special handles, instead of teaching them the advantages of the French grip.

When the Master teaches an offensive action preceded by an attack on the blade, he must follow a logical progression. Thus, the study will be done in the following order:

Offensive actions preceded by a beat:

- 1- Simple direct attacks
- 2 - Simple indirect attacks
- 3- Direct & indirect simple attacks combined with displacements
- 4- Compound attacks
- 5- Compound attacks combined with displacements

Offensive actions preceded by a pressure:

- 1- Simple direct attacks
- 2- Compound attacks
- 3- Indirect simple attacks, compound combined with displacements
- 4- Simple direct attacks requiring more difficult execution

Offensive actions with a step forward can, in both cases, be taught at the same time. The Master

must take into account the pupil's speed and technique in order to give to his actions (engagements, displacements) the speed and desired suddenness.

The froissement is studied to develop strength of the hand. To facilitate the action, the Master positions his arm 3/4 or completely extended and the pupil develops the offensive action with the desired intensity without a pause.

The Master must particularly watch the coordination of the attack on the blade and of the final phase of the offensive action as soon as the pupil starts to execute the action with speed. It often happens that the offensive action is developed to the detriment of the attack on the blade or with the arm incompletely extended. It is therefore indispensable to break the action down into steps whenever necessary.

To be sure that the pupil executes the attack on the blade correctly the Master can sometimes deceive it and correct the faults of the hand, the finger action, the arm position, the blocking and, of course, the coordination. As soon as the pupil possesses good technique, the Master multiplies the exercises combined with attacks on the blade and displacements (in low line as in high line).

THE COULÉ

Whilst not being an attack on the blade, the coul   is studied in this chapter because of the place it occupies in the preparations of the attack and similarly for attacks on the blade.

I -DEFINITION

The coul   is the action of sliding the blade along the opponent's blade while extending the arm to prepare or neglect the attack.

II - TECHNICAL STUDY

The coul   is executed by extending the weapon arm following the principles of the straight hit, by sliding the blade against the opponent's blade whilst maintaining contact with the blade without forcing.

The extension of the arm must be relaxed and supple without contraction of the shoulder, the hand placed in such a manner that the point moves above and close to the opponent's guard.

The coul   combines with a step forward, the extension of the weapon arm starts just before the displacement of the front foot and finishes at the moment that the rear foot lands on the ground. The point is placed far into the opponent's guard and thus permits the fencer to obtain the expected reaction with more certitude.

The coul   is equally executed in the low lines following the same principle - the point penetrates into the opponent's guard, underneath the guard and as far forward as possible.

III - TACTICAL STUDY

The coul   is often used and is effective against a line that is badly covered. The position of the extending arm must in no case give the opponent the opportunity to guess the attack to follow.

The coul   is invariably preceded by a contact of the blades. It is therefore executed in the following cases:

- When the blades are already in contact, therefore engaged.
- On the opponent's engagement, the change of engagement, etc.
- Preceded by the engagement, change of engagement, etc.

In these three cases, it can only be executed in relation to the opponent's position which tactically offers two possibilities:

- a position not completely closing the line
- a position opposing the line in which the coul   is executed, finishing in a line completely uncovered.

In both cases, the coul   can have two principle aims:

- 1) *Not provoke a reaction*
The coul   does not always provoke a more or less immediate reaction. In this case it is followed by a direct action in the line in which it occurred, without a pause and with a lunge or with a fl  che. It can be equally followed by an indirect action in the low line.
- 2) *To provoke a reaction*
The coul   can provoke a complete or even exaggerated covering action, in the line in which it is executed. It is therefore followed by indirect attacks either in high line or low line, or equally by compound attacks, but these occur rarely, as the very advanced progression of the point into the opponent's guard prevents the multiplication of feints.

IV - FAULTS TO AVOID

- 1) *Forcing, opposition or lifting of the hand*
Provokes an immediate closing of the line, which prevents any effective progression.
- 2) *Insufficient progression*
The following attack is easily parried because the point is too far away from the target.

3) *Excessive progression*

Makes deceiving very difficult in indirect or compound attacks especially when one must try to avoid meeting the opponent's forearm.

V - SPECIFIC DEFENSIVE ACTIONS

These occur in two usual forms:

- 1) *Reflex*
When the attack comes as a surprise requiring the use of parries.
- 2) *Premeditated*
In two different ways
 - a) Step back at the beginning of the coul   to destroy the reaction expected by the opponent, either by staying in the same line, or by changing the line.
 - b) Execute an attack on the blade or taking of the blade before the attack has been completely developed.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Both the weight of the point in electric Foil and insufficient technique result in the coul   being used much less nowadays. The orthopaedic grips used by a good number of fencers do not allow maximum use of the tactile sensitivity that is indispensable in the execution of the coul  . This causes them to often attack with the arm bent, which provokes counter-offensive actions. Trying to lodge the point as far forward as possible justifies trompements by disengagement. However, it is sometimes useful to deceive with a cutover since the position of the opponent's point sometimes allows this without too much movement. Also the cutover offers the advantage of protection from counter-offensive actions in the high line. For example, coul   in quarte line, cutover.

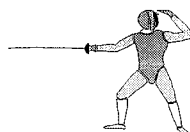
For two opposite handed fencers, the coul   is easily used. The coul   in quarte is very effective and allows the attack to be developed in the high line or the low line. The trompement with a cutover allows for attaining the outside line which is difficult to protect.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of the coul   requires that the student already has a good feel for the blade and the necessary dexterity to give all the finesse and speed required to the final action. The Master must ask for *complete and supple* extension of the weapon arm and, in the actions executed on his reaction, must *not react too early*, which will only cause the pupil to develop the movement with the arm bent.

The position of certain fencers, who are often in a low line or with the point at the height of the hand, justifies the study of the coul   in this line, as well as the different indirect and compound attacks that can be developed with success.

The Master must attach great importance to the coordination of the weapon arm and the legs, and to the pupil's balance during the steps forward.



CHAPTER XVII

TAKINGS OF THE BLADE

I - DEFINITION

A taking of the blade is an action on the opponent's blade having the aim of securing and dominating it.

II - CLASSIFICATION

There are four takings of the blade:

- the opposition
- the croisé
- the bind
- the envelopment

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

A - Description

1) *The opposition*

Take the opponent's blade *in a line* and dominate it by keeping it *in the same line* until the final phase of the action.

2) *The croisé*

Take the opponent's blade *in a high line*, bring it to the *corresponding low line* (or vice-versa) by dominating and deflecting it in the final phase of the action.

3) *The bind*

Take the blade *in the high line*, bring it to the *opposite low line* (or vice-versa) by dominating it and deflecting it in the final phase of the action.

4) *The envelopment*

Take the blade in one line, bring it back to the same line with a circular movement of the hand and the point and dominate and deflect it in the final part of the action.

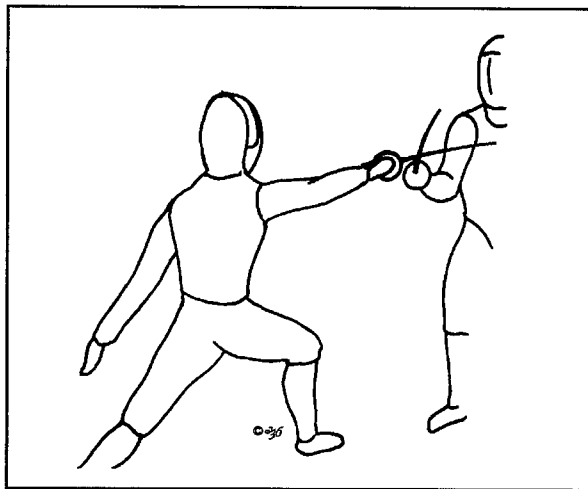
These four takings of the blade can be executed in all lines.

B - General conditions of execution

Whichever taking of the blade is used, certain general conditions must be respected for the technical execution to be perfect.

- 1) Execute the taking of the blade on an extending arm, a completely extended arm or an arm that is 3/4 extended.
- 2) Execute the taking of the blade on a horizontal or nearly horizontal blade (when the point is only several centimetres higher or lower than the hand).
- 3) Contact the blade without roughness with the guard and the forte of the blade while extending the arm in such a way that the opponent's point is past the guard by approximately 10-12 centimetres.
- 4) Dominate the blade by lifting or lowering the hand, without forcing.
- 5) Using the guard, maintain contact with the opponent's blade during the whole execution of the taking of the blade.
- 6) Travel the length of the opponent's blade with a force proportional to the resistance to be overcome.
- 7) In the final part of the taking of the blade reposition the point of the weapon in the direction of the target aimed for, with the arm completely extended at the moment when the lunge or the flèche is executed.
- 8) Open the opponent's line in the final part of the lunge or the flèche with the necessary force.

C - Execution of takings of the blade



The opposition in sixte

1) The opposition

This action is executed in all lines but particularly in those that deflect the opponent's blade towards the outside of the body (ie sixte, octave).

The opposition consists of taking the opponent's blade at its extremity then extending the arm progressively advancing the whole length of the blade. Attack by lunge (or flèche) and, in the final part of the action, combine the movements of lifting and opposition of the hand with a force proportional to the resistance to be overcome.

When this taking of the blade is done in the lines of quarte and septime, the degree of opposition is greater in order to obtain good covering, with the blade and the arm forming a broken line in the final part of the attack.

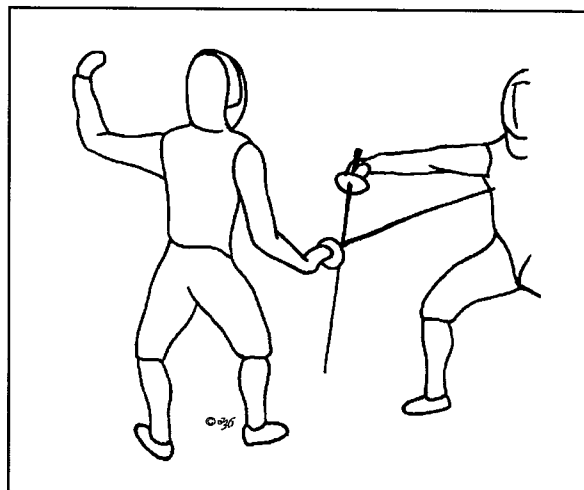
2) The croisé

The croisé can also be executed in all lines, but it is mainly used from quarte to septime and principally as a riposte (sixte-octave with opposite handed fencers).

The croisé consists of taking the opponent's blade at its extremity then extending the arm to progressively advance the whole length of the blade while bringing it into the corresponding low or high line. Attack by lunge (or flèche) and, in the final part of the action, combine the opposition movement and lowering of the hand with a force proportional to the resistance to be overcome.

When this taking of the blade finishes in the

line of quarte and especially in the line of sixte, the degree of opposition and lowering of the hand must be accentuated. The execution of the croisé of quarte is facilitated by the rotation of the hand, the pronated position in the final part of the action allows the opponent's blade to be more easily dominated and to meet the target with more perpendicularity.

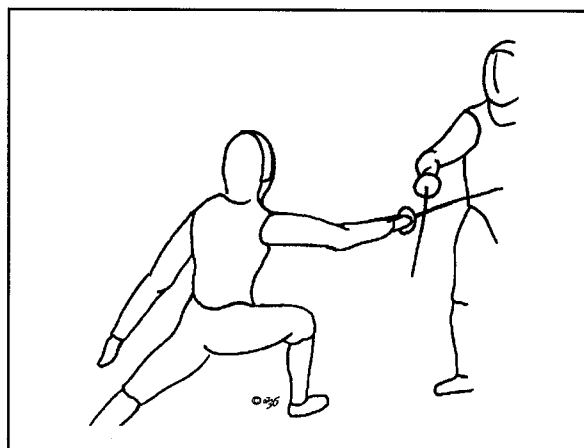


The croisé in quarte

3) The bind

As for the opposition, the bind can be executed in all lines but its effectiveness also depends on the line in which it finishes.

The bind consists of taking the opponent's blade at its extremity, then extending the arm to progressively advance the length of the blade while bringing it from the high line to the opposite low line or vice-versa. Attack by lunge (or flèche) and, in the final part of the action, combine the movements of opposition, elevation or lowering of the hand with a force proportional to the resistance to be overcome.



The bind from quarte to octave

4) *The envelopment*

The envelopment can be executed in all lines, but, like the opposition, is limited to the lines that allow the opponent's blade to be taken outside the body (sixte, octave).

The envelopment consists of taking the opponent's blade at its extremity, then extending the arm to progressively advance the whole length of the blade by making the point describe a complete circle in the same line. Attack by lunge (or flèche) and, in the final part of the action, combine the movements of opposition, raising or lowering the hand, with a force proportional to the resistance to be overcome.

When the taking of the blade finishes in quarte or in septime, the blade and the arm form a broken line to obtain better covering.

D - Generalities of execution from the different distances

The technical execution of takings of the blade varies according to the distance. They can be executed:

- 1) *At close range or riposting distance:* After the parry the bent weapon arm only extends in the desired line when the opponent's point has been deflected.
- 2) *At middle distance or lunging distance:* The lunge begins when the extension of the arm is complete at the moment that the taking of the blade is finished.

3) *At large distance:*

a) *Step forward and lunge:*

During the step, the blade is taken as the front foot starts to move and finishes the moment that the rear foot touches the ground.

b) *Flèche:*

With the same coordination as for the middle distance, the flèche is executed when the weapon arm finishes its extension.

Specifics:

- a) *When the takings of the blade are used as a preparation of attack* their execution always requires a step forward to contact the opponent's blade and reinforce the action. When a taking of

the blade is used as a preparation of the attack, it is followed by the desired attack executed with a lunge or a flèche.

- b) *Double, compound or combined takings of the blade* are practicably only used in Epée and are always coordinated with steps according to the number of actions.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

In spite of the advantages that they offer for dominating the blade until the final part of the attack, takings of the blade are infrequently used in electric Foil for the following reasons:

- 1) The opponent's guard position, with arm bent, point higher or lower than the hand, does not present the best conditions for the blade to be taken.
- 2) The duration of execution of takings of the blade, for example binds and in particular envelopments, involve obvious movements of the hand and leg, giving the opponent the opportunity to execute counter-offensive actions (derobement).
- 3) As the conventions in Foil only require minimal contact with the blade when it is in line, it is more favourable to use attacks on the blade as they are easier, faster and more difficult to derobe.

If these inconveniences hamper the execution of takings of the blade in offensive actions, the use of takings of the blade in riposte or counter-riposte actions is, on the contrary, very effective; in particular on opponents who systematically remise after their attack fails.

A - The opposition

The opposition is the most common taking of the blade in Foil. Its technical execution allows it to be given great speed and it is similar to the authoritative straight hit; the only difference being that it is executed on an extended or extending arm. It cannot be used as a riposte - the opponent's blade is too deep to allow this. On the other hand, it can be executed on the opponent's return to guard following the same principles as for an offensive action.

B - The croisé

The croisé is rarely used as an attack. This taking of the blade often leaves the opponent's blade pointing off target (knee, thigh) and results in an off target hit in Electric Foil which, if badly interpreted by the referee, invalidates the attack.

On the other hand, the croisé is very effective as a riposte when the defensive action starts before the completion of the opponent's attack. Well executed, the point must reach the target before the opponent's front foot touches the ground. It is reinforced by a slight advance of the front foot, executed simultaneously with the parry. Sometimes its execution gives it the appearance of a time hit by interception.

C - The bind

The bind is sometimes used in Foil but it is necessary to limit the lateral displacement of the hand in its execution, particularly when the opponent's blade is brought into a low line.

In order to limit the time of execution, it is necessary to very quickly bring the opponent's blade into the low line, with the aid of the guard. As such it resembles a low line opposition starting from a high line position. The lateral displacement of the hand depends on the position of the opponent's blade and on the necessity to dominate the weapon.

Used as a riposte, the bind has the drawback of bringing the opponent's point in front of the valid target. For this reason the croisé is preferred; however, when the parry has been delayed, the bind remains an excellent method for dominating the opponent's blade.

D - The envelopment

The envelopment remains the least common taking of the blade in Foil. The duration of execution makes it obvious and vulnerable to being deceived. To be effectively used, it must be executed with a step forward in order to reduce the risk of counter-offensive actions.

For the same reasons, it is little used as a riposte because it gives the opponent the opportunity to reprise, sometimes involuntarily, and to gain a fencing time before the final part of the execution.

E - The takings of the blade used as preparations of attacks

Takings of the blade are quite commonly used as preparations of the attack in Foil. In this case they are executed without complete extension of the arm, and with great intensity in order to provoke a spontaneous reaction, which in general, occurs in the lines in which they normally finish. They are followed by indirect and sometimes compound attacks. To reinforce their effectiveness, they are combined with displacements.

In Foil, the opponent's guard position does not favour offensive actions with taking of the blade. Most of the time it can only be executed after having provoked the extension of the opponent's arm with a preparation. In this case it is called a counter-time action and is the subject of a specific chapter.

From a tactical point of view it is sometimes useful to deliberately adopt a position of guard with the weapon arm very extended which induces the opponent to use takings of the blade. They are then very easy to derobe at the beginning of their execution or sometimes there is the opportunity to execute, with discretion, ceding parries followed by ripostes.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

A - As attacks

- 1) *Bad hand position when taking the opponent's blade:* the point goes out of line which increases the duration of execution of the taking of the blade.
- 2) *A taking of the blade badly executed:* the fencer is vulnerable to a derobement; or it increases the duration of execution of the taking of the blade.
- 3) *Lunge executed too early:* the opponent's blade is not completely out of the way and cannot be dominated, the hit passes or is flat.
- 4) *Bad position of the hand in the final part of the action:* the elevation and opposition are insufficient and result in a lack of precision.
- 5) *Movements of elevation and opposition executed too early:* provoke a reaction from the opponent (resistance, derobement, withdrawal) that prevents the complete execution of the taking of the blade.

6) *Lack of progression*: the taking of the blade thus executed does not allow dominance of the blades to occur at the beginning of the lunge, and requires an additional "time" in the extension of the arm.

7) *Bad co-ordination (hand, arm, legs)*:

a) Can provoke a stop hit between the taking of the blade and the start of the lunge, as the opponent is given the opportunity to react.

b) The lunge started before the complete execution of the taking of the blade does not allow the opponent's blade to be completely dominated, and sometimes it escapes.

B - As a Riposte or Counter-Riposte

1) *Bad Parry*:

a) A rough uncontrolled parry deflects the opponent's blade in such a way that makes it spring back and does allow the blade to be easily taken.

b) A bad position of the hand distances the point and increases the time taken to execute the riposte.

2) *Extension of the weapon arm is too hasty*: often provokes an immediate reaction, and for certain takings of the blade does not sufficiently deflect the opponent's point, which then lands off target (sometimes on target).

3) *Bad position of the hand in the final part of the action*: results in lack of precision.

VI - APPROPRIATE DEFENCE

Several methods of defence are used to cause the failure of an opponent's offensive developed with a taking of the blade. There are four of them:

- Opposition parry
- Counter parry
- Ceding parry
- Derobement.

A - Opposition parry

Consists of taking the parry corresponding to the line in which the taking of the blade finishes. This

parry closes the line and deflects the blade while resisting the opponent's strength.

It can be executed in two ways to overcome the opponent's strength with a minimum of effort and muscular contraction:

1) By completely bending the arm so that the parry acts on the weak section of the opponent's blade.

2) By co-ordinating the parry with a step back, which allows the bending of the arm to be limited in the execution of the parry, and to act on the weak section of the opponent's blade. This method of parrying allows very rapid ripostes to be executed with a step forward or half lunge.

B - Counter parry

Resembles a change of engagement and deflects the opponent's blade in the line opposed to that in which the taking of the blade ends.

It has to be executed with a step back, because during its execution the two blades are no longer in contact and the opponent's point is still progressing towards the target. The parries, on the other hand, must preferably be followed by direct ripostes, executed with a step forward if the size of the retreat dictates this.

C - Ceding parry (See chapter "The Parries")

The ceding parry is executed in the low or high line, opposite that in which the taking of the blade ended - e.g. quarte-low or quinte on an opposition in octave. This parry does not provoke the opponent's reflexes immediately but it can allow the use of remises. It must therefore be executed with a perfectly coordinated step forward. This parry only allows direct ripostes, executed with a bent arm.

D - The derobement

Consists of withdrawing the blade from the opponent's attack, with a half-lunge and without blade contact. If the derobement is quite easy to execute on binds and envelopments, this is not so for oppositions and croisés. These takings of the blade consist of only one fencing time, and the derobement resembles a false stop hit on a simple attack finishing above or below.

Generally, any of these defensive actions can be used. However, when the opponent's intentions become clear, it is preferable to use ceding parries on all takings of the blade or derobe them when they are preceded by a preparation.

VII - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

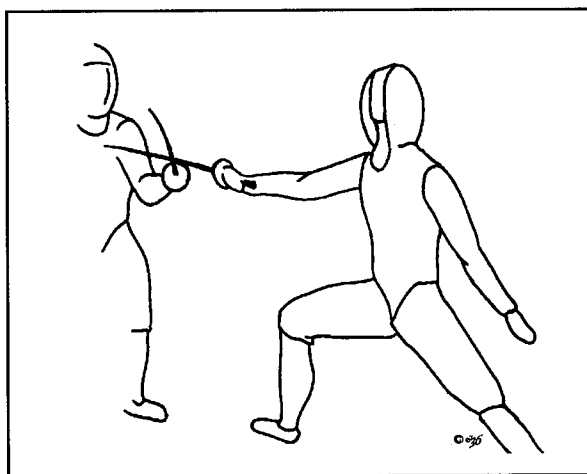
Double or compound takings of the blade as well as combinations of them are not studied in this chapter. Offensive actions in Foil are determined by the speed of execution, multiplying or combining the taking of the blade results in delays in the final part of an action which gives the opponent the possibility of effectively counter attacking. Although the flèche is a method of attack that offers few advantages in Foil, it can be used with takings of the blade which end in the high line. In this case it benefits from the element of surprise and allows blade domination to be executed more easily and with less intensity in the final part of the action.

Although they are used less in offensive actions in electric Foil than in ordinary Foil, takings of the blade must not be neglected. They require perception and good hand and eye co-ordination.

Left handed fencers rarely use the same takings of the blade that two same handed fencers use - their execution requires them to exaggerate the final opposition, which reduces length and precision of the attack.

Between opposite handed fencers it is recommended to use the following takings of the blade:

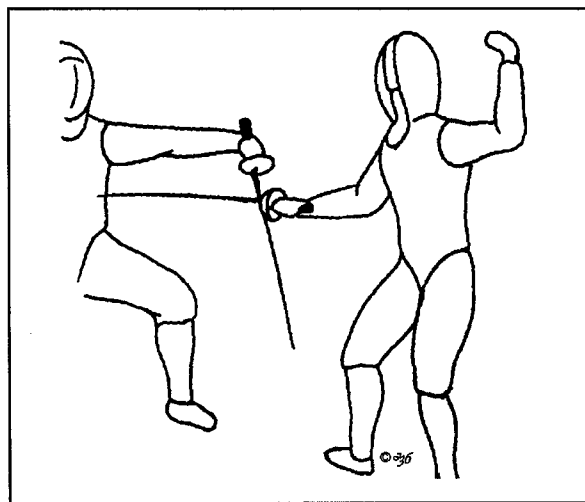
- 1) *Oppositions:*
 - in the line of quarte
 - in the line of septime



The opposition of quarte on a left handed fencer

- 2) *Croisés*
 - from the line of sixte to octave
- 3) *Binds*
 - from the line of sixte to septime
 - from the line of octave to quarte
- 4) *Envelopments*
 - in the line of quarte
 - in the line of septime.

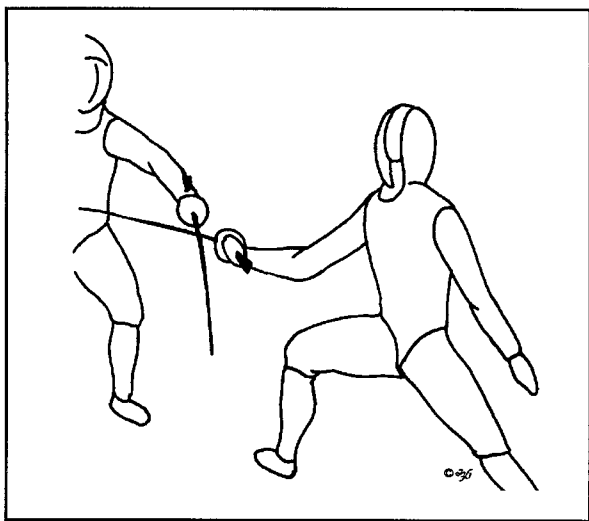
Takings of the blade executed as ripostes or counter-ripostes get their effectiveness from the parry that precedes them. The parry with opposition that deflects the blade without roughness allows the opponent's blade to be controlled and maintained. The opponent has no immediate reaction or remises involuntarily after this type of parry, which favours ripostes with taking of the blade. Between opposite handed fencers, the low line parries that precede ripostes with taking of the blade must be executed with the hand in complete supination and the point well in line. This method increases precision and facilitates the final opposition.



The croise of sixte on a left handed fencer

VIII-TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

Modern fencing leads young fencers into bouting very early, if not too early. The lack of technique and coordination limits their attacking possibilities, quite often developed without a defined tactical idea. Instinctively the beginner seeks blade contact and he wants to take it even when the circumstances of the bout do not permit him to do so, and often without the most elementary of precautions. Therefore, quite early on, the Master must teach his pupils the different ways of taking the opponent's blade, to dominate it correctly and help them acquire good coordination.



The bind from sixte to septime on a left handed fencer

To teach the takings of the blade the Master must follow a logical progression taking into account the difficulties of execution and coordination. The study is made in the following order:

- the opposition
- the bind
- the envelopement
- the croisé

The technical study must be simplified as much as possible. To this end the Master places his blade in a line which is as close as possible to the pupil's hand, in order to limit large movements. The arm is kept completely extended and the weapon held with the desire force allowing the pupil to become familiar with resistance but without causing reflex contraction of his hand and arm.

Once this technique has been well assimilated, the Master has the pupil execute takings of the blade on the extension of the arm. He varies the speed and rhythm, and moves the pupil around after each action. To increase difficulty, the Master presents his blade in different lines, and then he can include tactical ideas.

The Master must require:

- 1 - Good position of the hand and the point when the pupil takes the blade.
- 2 - That the pupil takes the blade with the forte of the blade and the guard.
- 3 - That the taking of the blade be completely finished before the lunge is started.
- 4 - That the movements of opposition, lifting or lowering of the hand be sufficient.

To make sure that the pupil can execute the takings of the blade correctly, the Master must:

- 1 - Present his blade by extending the blade cleanly and *completely*.

- 2 - Let the pupil deflect the blade away.

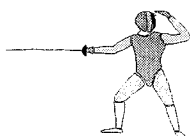
He must not:

- 1 - Bend the arm at the moment that the pupil takes the blade.
- 2 - Cede or shorten the arm before the taking of the blade is complete.

In the study of the different defensive actions on takings of the blade, the Master must execute his actions with the full intention of hitting the pupil. He must attach great importance to distance and ensure that the pupil coordinates the retreat or step forward perfectly with the necessary size and speed following the parry requested.

The teaching of ripostes or counter-ripostes by takings of the blade requires correct offensive actions from the Master. According to the parry the pupil can riposte from a stationary position, with a step forward, a lunge, or a flèche.

When the pupil possesses excellent technique, the Master will make him execute the different takings of the blade by incorporating them in exercises with several different possibilities.



CHAPTER XVIII

THE COUNTER ATTACKS

I - DEFINITION

Counter attacks are actions that cause the failure of the opponent's offensive action by gaining a fencing time on it.

II - CLASSIFICATION

There are four distinct forms of counter-attacks:

- the stop hit
- the "time hits" (with opposition and interception)
- the derobement
- the esquive.

1. THE STOP HIT

i) - Definition

The stop hit is a direct counter-offensive action which gains a fencing time on the offensive action.

ii) - Technical Study

The stop hit consists of a straightening of the arm followed by a half lunge. It is executed with the hand in supination in the high line, and with the hand in pronation in the low line.

2. TIME HITS

(Stop hits with opposition)

i) Definition

A - The "time hit" with opposition: is a direct counter offensive action which intercepts the offensive movement by closing the line in which it will finish.

B - The "time hit" with interception: is a direct counter offensive action which is a fencing time ahead of the offensive action by closing the line through which it must pass.

ii) Technical Study

A - *The "time hit" with opposition*: consists of the extension of the arm followed by a half lunge, the hand in supination.

It is executed:

- 1) *On simple attacks*: principally on those finishing in the top and outside lines. In the other lines it requires an exaggerated opposition to close the line, which invariably hampers precision.
- 2) *On compound attacks*: always in the most favourable lines. It is preceded by parries that facilitate the opponent's attack and is developed in the last moment of the attack.

B - *The interception time*: the interception time consists of an extension of the arm followed by a half-lunge, the hand in supination or in pronation.

It is executed:

- 1) *On simple attacks*: indirectly by disengagement. The point of the weapon is lowered or is raised in the line through which the attack must pass, then the arm extends at the same time as the half lunge is executed.
- 2) *On compound attacks*: "the interception time" is executed on all compound attacks except on those finishing with a cutover. It's execution begins at the moment when the last parry that the opponent must deceive, would logically be taken.

To intercept, start the parry with the point (whether it is direct or circular) in order to bring it into the line where the opponent's blade will pass, then extend the arm with a half lunge.

The interception time on an attack by 1-2 or finishing by 1-2 is always made in the low or high line opposite that of the engagement.

3. THE DEROBEMENT

i) Definition

The derobement is an indirect or compound counter-offensive action that gains a fencing time on the offensive action by deceiving an attempt to find the blade, without any blade contact.

ii) Technical Study

The derobement can be executed in all lines. Its technical execution corresponds to that of the simple or compound attack from which it takes its name

(by disengagement, cutover, "1-2" etc...). It is executed with a half lunge to insure the gaining of a fencing time on the offensive action. It can finish with the hand in supination or pronation according to the target and the line chosen.

4. THE ESQUIVE

i) Definition

The esquive consists of withdrawing the valid target area from the opponent's attack (an evasion) while executing a counter-offensive action.

ii) Technical Study

The esquive is executed in two ways:

1) *The underpass (passatta di sotto)*. The underpass is a backwards lunge with an extension of the weapon arm. The left hand touches the ground for support and to counteract the loss of equilibrium caused by the torso leaning forward. As its name indicates, its use is limited to the low lines, with the hand in pronation.

2) *The esquive in quarte (in quartata)*. The esquive in quarte consists of displacing the rear foot laterally by pivoting on the front foot while extending the weapon arm. The torso is turned sideways. The complete turning of the torso is facilitated by a slight elevation of the legs and the extension of the weapon arm that is simultaneously executed with the displacement of the back foot. It is executed in the high line with the hand in supination.

III - GENERAL TACTICAL STUDY FOR COUNTER ATTACKS

Counter attacks are actions which must only be used after having judged the opponent's attack with certitude. For this reason, it is very difficult to determine the choice and the opportune moment for using them while respecting the conventions.

Counter attacking at random, or systematically, rarely results in a hit, except on an opponent's action which is technically badly executed. This tactic quickly fails on an astute fencer, who does not give the counter attack the possibility of gaining a fencing time, or who uses it to his advantage. It is always preferable to use a parry, as it allows the fencing phrase to continue with a riposte.

However, counter attacks allow the defence to be varied. When executed with good timing, they impose certain precautions on the opponent in his preparations, such as in compound attacks.

1 - The stop hit

The stop hit is used in the following cases:

- a) On simple or compound attacks that are badly executed (bent arm at the start of the lunge or the flèche)
- b) On simple or compound attacks executed with a step forward (badly co-ordinated, bent arm).

2 - Time hit

a) *with opposition*

A time hit requires good judgment and perfect technical execution at the opportune moment. It is done on simple or compound attacks finishing in the above or outside lines.

b) *Interception time*

An *interception time* requires even surer judgement. Its difficulties of use - both technical and tactical - often make it an action that is more of chance than judgment. In practice, the only valid time of interception is that of octave on a doublement in sixte.

3 - The derobement

Derobements are frequently used, especially by fencers possessing a good hand. They can be executed:

- a) On all preparations closely linked to offensive actions, such as the engagements, the double engagements etc...
- b) On all attacks on the blade by beats, froissements.
- c) On takings of the blade, especially when they are compound.
- d) As a defensive action on the counter-time by executing a compound derobement.

Derobements are very useful for hampering the opponent's offensive actions, particularly when they are developed with a systematic searching for the blade.

4 - The esquive

Esquives are particularly useful on fencers who overuse the flèche attack. To be effective, they must be done at the right moment and completely remove

the valid target area without exposing or substituting the non-valid target area instead, and thus be penalised.

If used too frequently, they no longer benefit from the element of surprise.

IV - FAULTS TO AVOID

Counter attacks are technically composed of actions that have already been discussed, the faults in this paragraph only occur because of bad tactical use.

- 1) *Counter attack on the final part of the attack:* too late to gain a fencing time and provokes a double hit with priority given to the attack.
- 2) *Stop hit into the blade:* comes from a bad choice of line - the blade is accidentally deflected by the attack.
- 3) *Time of opposition or interception that misses the target:* comes from an error of distance or of delayed execution. The opponent's offensive action has also been badly judged.
- 4) *Blade contact in the derobement:* comes from delayed execution or a bad position of the weapon arm or the point.
- 5) *Incomplete esquite:* the attack lands or touches an off target area, causing the esquite to be in error.

V - APPROPRIATE DEFENCE

Counter attacks can be made to fail in two ways:

- 1 - Prevent the counter attack from gaining a fencing time by attacking with simple actions at lunging distance.
- 2 - Use a tactic of second intention (counter time), having the aim of determining the nature of the counter-attack and the target where it will be directed. Use the desired preparation to effectively parry the counter-attack and then develop the offensive action.

These two methods can be used on counter-attacks executed as stop hits or by derobement. However, there is practically no effective defence for the time hit with opposition or interception time when they are well executed.

The esquives which are executed on the final part of the attack leave no chance for the attacker to recover. Good judgment allows the fencer to

determine the opponent's intentions and to consequently react in order to exploit the counter-offensive action.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Stop hits and derobements are essentially counter-offensive actions. They are sometimes confused with attacks on the preparation - while it is true that there is very little difference, quick execution must leave no doubts. For stop hits and derobements to be judged as counter-attacks, it is indispensable that they be executed at the beginning of the offensive action and *not before it commences*. If they are executed before the beginning of the offensive action they become attacks on the preparation and will need a complete lunge.

The time hit that prevents the attack from reaching the target, and the esquite which allows the attack to be developed cannot be considered in the same light. The stop hit has unfortunately become an action that is very prized by foilists in the electric weapon. It is favoured because offensive actions are, in general, developed with a step and lunge and often with a cutover. Few fencers know how to prepare and use counter time actions - the stop hit in the low line always has a chance to succeed, as the defensive reflexes in the low line lack spontaneity.

The time hit and interception time have practically disappeared from foil fencing. Mobility and unorthodox positions of the hand and blade make them practically impossible. Their use requires an exact notion of distance and a well controlled hand by both fencers.

Derobements demand finger dexterity, finesse of the point which are qualities that are tending to disappear from the repertoire of the electric Foil fencer. The tolerance towards the use of the orthopaedic grip does not always allow the blade to be withdrawn in time, even though the preparatory movements are larger. Many fencers use the stop hit, which is easier to execute but does not always gain the fencing time necessary.

The esquives are not used much in Foil where few attacks are developed with a *flèche*. They are risky on fencers who are more or less precise and also on fencers who do not control their points; the attacks of the latter often hitting a target which was not intended. When a fencer feels technically inferior he can use counter-offensive actions, but only if sound judgement allows him to use them correctly.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of counter offensive actions does not require the same teaching practice as offensive or defensive actions. Execution depends on judgment, timing and knowledge, which are qualities that are developed much more in bouting than in the lesson.

The Master always has a tendency to create a situation that over-facilitates the execution of the counter-attack or its defensive, when in fact the reality in a bout is quite different.

A teaching procedure giving the pupil some initiative is to be recommended. It consists of exercises with several different intentions of which there are some examples below:

1 - The Stop Hit

The Master attacks with a cutover, either with a lunge or a step forward lunge - the pupil parries or counter attacks.

The Master either does a simple attack with step forward and lunge or a compound attack with a bent arm - the pupil parries in the first

case or counter attacks in the second.

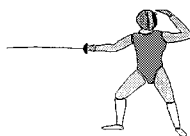
2 - The Derobement

The Master precedes his attack with varying preparations - the pupil parries the attack if the preparation is completed or derobes if he has judged it correctly.

The Master attacks with either a taking of the blade or by attack on the blade on the pupil's forward (long) guard with the point horizontal. The pupil parries or derobes.

The Master must teach the different counter attacks, yet not make them repetitive exercises. Indeed their execution should be varied since there are many ways and possibilities of using them in bouting. Esquives are taught under the same conditions by choosing attacks against which they would be effective.

In all these exercises the Master must execute his actions with the maximum reality possible in order to place the pupil in conditions approaching those of a bout.



CHAPTER XIX

REMISE - REDOUBLEMENT - REPRISE

THE REMISE

I - DEFINITION

The remise is a direct offensive or counter-offensive action executed after an opponent's parry without prior return to guard.

II - CLASSIFICATION

Remises are classified according to their characteristics:

- *offensive*: said to be a continuation of the offensive action.
- *counter-offensive*: said to be stop hits into an offensive action.

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

Whatever its form, the remise is executed with the maintenance of an extended arm. Its co-ordination with leg movements varies according to whether it is:

1 - An offensive action executed from the following positions:

- a) *from the guard position*:
 - by advancing the torso
 - by bringing the front foot slightly forward.
- b) *from the half lunge*:
 - by converting the half lunge to a lunge
 - by converting the half lunge to a flèche.
- c) *from the flèche*:
 - by completing the flèche.

2 - A counter offensive action executed from the following positions:

- a) *from the on-guard position*:
 - while remaining on guard
 - while retreating.
- b) *from the half lunge*:
 - while remaining in a half lunge
 - while returning to guard.
- c) *from the lunge*:
 - while remaining on the lunge
 - while returning to guard.
- d) *from the flèche*:
 - while trying to regain equilibrium.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

Lack of technique often leads to remisings by reflex. This method of using the remise sometimes benefits from the bad execution of the opponent's offensive action; the parry or an error in judgment. However, it is not valid against an immediate direct offensive action that follows the parry.

To be valid, it is essential that the remise lands a fencing time ahead. Sometimes the reflex of remisings is justified because of blade feeling, but it is more sure and efficient when it is calculated.

As the remise is outside the conventions of foil regarding time, the clarity of its execution depends on an opponent's fault that has been exploited.

The remise is executed after the opponent's parry in the conditions and cases following:

1 - As a continuation

- a) *With angulation*: by a lateral displacement of the arm, the body or the front foot on a parry maintaining the blade and not followed by a riposte.
- b) *Bringing the point in line*: where an opponent parries and leaves the blade, or parries and changes the line.

2 - As a stop hit

- a) *By bringing the point in line*: on an opponent who parries and ripostes or counter ripostes in the following cases:
 - indirectly or by withdrawing the arm
 - compound
 - in broken time
 - who precedes offensive actions with displacements, allowing a fencing time to be gained.

The remise as a continuation or as a stop hit is executed on all offensive or counter-offensive actions *which have been parried*, that is to say, attacks, ripostes, counter-ripostes, redoublement, remises and reprises.

THE REDOUBLEMENT

I - DEFINITION

The redoublement is an offensive or counter-offensive action executed by any other action than a straight hit in another line or the same line as that of the opponent's parry without prior return to guard.

II - CLASSIFICATION

The classification of the redoublement is identical to that of remise.

III - TECHICAL STUDY

Redoublements are executed in the same positions as those given for remises.

The co-ordination of the action of the sword arm and the legs is identical. The action of the arm allows great variety in actions which regain the offensive. These may be:

- indirect
- compound
- made by derobing a change of line
- direct, preceded by an attack on the blade.

The distance separating the two fencers at the moment of the execution of the redoublement

influences the movement of the sword arm. Thus, the redoublement by disengagement or compound actions sometimes needs the arm to be slightly withdrawn, which is even more pronounced when it is preceded by an attack on the blade in order to act on the suitable part of the opponent's blade.

The redoublement by cutover or consisting of a feint by cutover needs a crisp withdrawal of the arm to pass above the opponent's point.

The redoublement by derobement executed as a stop hit on the riposte or the counter-riposte can be made with the arm extended. It is sufficient to derobe a change of line as the return to guard allows correct distance to be maintained.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

The tactical observations given in the chapter corresponding to the "remise" are valid for the redoublement. The redoublement executed by reflex offers the same inconveniences and the same advantages whether it is calculated or not, and allows a fencing time to be gained.

The redoublement is more often used as a continuation of the offensive or counter-offensive action than as a stop hit into the riposte or the counter riposte. It is executed in the following cases:

1 - As a continuation

On fencers who maintain the blade after having parried and who do not immediately riposte:

- a) *By disengagement*: by changing the line according to the parry and the targets easiest to reach:
 - after the parry of sixte, below or inside.
 - after the low line parries, in the high line.
- b) *By cutover*: by changing the line according to the position of the point in the parry eg. after the parry of quarte, high line.
- c) *Compound*:
 - by preceding the redoublement with a feint on an opponent who reacts (preferably laterally).
 - when the blade does not maintain contact after

the parry.

- d) *By derobement on the change of line*: by withdrawing the blade on the opponent who, after parrying, changes the line.
- e) *By attack on the blade*: by executing a beat preferably to fix the hand of the opponent who reacts or for whom the fencer senses the intention to parry the redoublement - it can be direct or indirect.

2 - As a stop hit

Redoublements as stop hits are only done on fencers who riposte or counter-riposte by taking the blade with either a step forward or a step forward lunge.

- a) *By disengagement or cutover*: according to the position of the opponent's blade at the beginning of the riposte or the counter-riposte with a taking of the blade.
- b) *By derobement*: in these same conditions, but preferably on the envelopment or the compound taking of the blade.

THE REPRISE

I - DEFINITION

The reprise is any second offensive action executed immediately after the first and preceded by a return to guard.

II - CLASSIFICATION

The reprise is executed in two ways, irrespective of the type of offensive action:

- preceded by a return to guard forwards.
- preceded by a return to guard backwards.

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

The return to guard forwards and backwards are described in the corresponding paragraph of the chapter "The Return to Guard".

Executed forwards or backwards, *the arm remains extended*, the second development (or the flèche) is executed *without a pause* following the technical principles outlined in the chapter "The Development".

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

The reprise is used tactically in the following cases:

- a) *With the return to guard forwards*:
 - on a fencer who systematically avoids the attack by stepping back.

- on a fencer who parries with a step back without riposting.

b) *With return to guard backwards:*

-on a fencer who remains stationary when parrying but does not riposte.

The reprise with the return to guard forwards is a delicate action that is vulnerable to counter-offensive moves. It is especially used by small fencers whose shorter lower limbs facilitate this action. It is more effective for tall fencers to reprise with a flèche. The current tendency of a good

number of foilists is to parry with a step back, thus requiring the use of the reprise with return to guard forward. However, the reprise must be well judged and executed in such a way that the opponent's counter-offensive action, if it occurs, cannot gain a fencing time.

The reprise with return to guard backwards is not used much. However, depending on the temperament of the opponent, it can be used successfully. In effect, the return to guard backwards tends to reassure the opponent and the suddenness of a new lunge can surprise him at the moment of relaxation.

GENERALITIES

I - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults concerning the technical execution are discussed in the chapter on simple attacks. Only the principal tactical faults are given below:

- 1) *Error of distance in the use of the remise:* when the attack passes the target the execution of the remise requires the withdrawal of the arm. It no longer allows a fencing time to be gained and quite often lacks precision.
- 2) *Error in distance in the use of the redoublement:* the redoublement lacks precision. When it is done in the low line it can be flat or too short, or if executed with a cutover in the high line it lands flat.
- 3) *Bad choice of redoublement:* the opponent's defensive reflex has been badly judged and the redoublement risks meeting the opponent's blade or arriving in a line that is already closed.
- 4) *Bad co-ordination in the reprise:* the fencer is vulnerable to a counter-offensive action. The new attack risks passing or landing flat when the action of the legs precedes that of the weapon arm.

II - APPROPRIATE DEFENCE

The appropriate defensive actions for remises,

reprises and redoublements differ according to whether the actions occur with or without warning.

1 - Remise

- a) *Reflex defensive action:* repeat the parry.
- b) *Premeditated defensive action:*
 - Parry and riposte direct (as a beat)
 - Parry with a step forward to make the opponent's point pass, and riposte.

2 - Redoublement

- a) *Reflex defensive action:* take one (or several) parries to close the line of the final part of the redoublement.
- b) *Premeditated defence:*
 - Parry and riposte direct in the open line of the redoublement action or hit in time.

- Parry with a step forward to break the distance and to hinder the execution of the redoublement, then riposte.

- Execute a counter time action on the deception of the parry or counter parry, e.g. execute a taking of the blade.

3 - Reprise

a) *Reflex defensive action*: parry by closing the line in which the reprise finishes.

b) *Premeditated defensive*:

- Counter attack the reprise on its first movement.

- Attack into the return to guard as the opponent prepares the reprise.

- Parry the reprise in the anticipated line and riposte.

III - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The execution of the remise and redoublement depends on the tactical intention. When the remise or redoublement is executed by reflex action, the initial attack is launched to hit and the reflex remise or redoublement gains great speed. The premeditated remise or redoublement is executed differently. The attack is not planned to hit (even though it may have all the qualities of realism) but to provoke an anticipated defensive movement, or the riposte. This caution allows one to compensate for an error of judgement.

In certain cases, the remise resembles a time hit with opposition when the indirect or compound riposte finishes in the high line (between two fencers of the same hand). For example, a remise after the parry of quarte followed by a disengage riposte high or after a parry of sixte followed by a 1 - 2 riposte in the high line.

The redoublement by cutover executed after the parry of quarte has some disadvantages. The withdrawal of the weapon arm during the cutover enables a direct riposte to be executed and the redoublement may unintentionally finish in the same line as the parry. The best course of action is to precede the redoublement by an attack on the blade e.g. a beat.

The conditions of the bout, where both fencers

can vary the distance, determines the eventual choice of redoublement. When the distance is reduced, it is necessary to withdraw the arm to facilitate the cutover in the high line whereas the disengagement is more difficult. After a parry in the low line, it is preferable to disengage high because in this case, the cutover requires too large a withdrawal of the arm and often arrives flat on the target.

Between fencers of opposite hand, the choice of the remise is dictated by the parry and riposte. It can be executed in the high line by angulation. The redoublement by cutover is regularly used and can reach the low line with a natural and rapid movement. With the electric foil remises and redoublements are unfortunately used too frequently. Too many referees are influenced by the electric box in relation to the remise and the redoublement which gain a fraction of a second on the riposte without them *being a fencing time ahead which alone gives them the priority*. Without this asset of judgement, fencers abuse the use of the remise and the redoublement to the detriment of the fencing phrase and future progress.

IV - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

When the pupil possesses good technique and sufficient tactical sense, the master can teach the remise and the redoublement. Whatever the distance, the redoublement requires great speed of hand and fingers in order to lodge the point. It is therefore indispensable to work it from all positions. The Master must attach great importance to the pupil's balance especially while remaining in the lunge position. He must also get the pupil used to the feeling of the opponent's parry, without a contraction of his weapon arm, in order to give his actions maximum speed and precision.

The remise and the redoublement must be taught with the false attack, which is an excellent preparation if it is perfectly executed and at correct distance. The Master can choose exercises that require the pupil to have timing, immediate assessment and feeling for the blade. For example, on an action executed as a false attack; if the Master ripostes direct the pupil counter ripostes, if he makes a compound riposte the pupil remises, if he parries without riposting the pupil executes a redoublement.

Remises and redoublements must be taught in the lesson so that the pupil would know how to use them in a bout. The Master must, above all, make the pupil aware that they are actions of second intention and are not the result of bad and unchangeable reflexes.