

THE ART OF THE SABRE
AND THE ÉPÉE

LUIGI BARBASETTI
has also written
THE ART OF THE FOIL

"One feels that Barbasetti has made a real contribution to the literature of the sword, whether from the standpoint of technic or from that of historical résumé and analyses. The whole book will undoubtedly receive a warm welcome from all studious devotees of the sword and from many who are merely interested in the historical aspect."—Scott D. Breckinridge, Former National Amateur Fencing Champion and Member of U. S. Olympic Fencing Team, in *The Lexington Leader*.

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Luigi Barbasetti


THE ART OF THE SABRE AND THE ÉPÉE

By LUIGI BARBASETTI

AUTHOR OF "THE ART OF THE FOIL," ETC

*Profusely Illustrated
with Line Cuts by
Ciro Barbasetti*

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PREFACE

WE have considered it opportune to join in the present volume the Sabre and the Épée, representing the two traditional weapons used in duelling. In adopting this plan we have not had in mind the duel, confined in our day to the state of a historical souvenir, our object simply being to abridge the text, eliminating explanations which are common to both weapons, because although it is true that the technique of the sabre differs greatly from that of the épée (their different structure demanding it), the conception and the theory of the offensive and defensive are based upon the same principle.

My advice to those who wish to follow the method for the sabre is to proceed without haste and to give careful attention to all the details of the First Part, and in particular to the practice of the exercises called *molinelli*. These are the details that permanently mold a fencer's form and style, which will exhibit either elegance or lack of finish according to the attention bestowed upon them from the beginning of the instruction.

You must not pass over any precept just because its execution seems easy; on the contrary, it is necessary to practice it with insistence, until the prescribed movements become instinctive. *This is the foundation*; after it is laid you may advance more rapidly. This pedagogy will produce wonderful results, because it

guides in the right direction those destined to become champions, and gives at least grace and dignity to the average fencer. And the last objective should inspire any school of fencing because its aim is to educate and to satisfy the largest possible number of people.

In the part of this volume devoted to the *épée*, I have suppressed detailed descriptions (theory of the movements, it might be said), because these are extensively dealt with in the book entitled *The Art of the Foil*. I have limited the exposition of the method to a few illustrated examples in the special part on the *épée*, setting forth a summary program, simple and at the same time practical, to which the master is to add the necessary explanations, and which will be sufficient for those who begin the study of this weapon without possessing any elementary notion of fencing. For those who have already been initiated into the art of the foil, this program constitutes a complementary guide containing special advice with reference to the tactics to be used during the assault, tactics which vary in every respect from the new fangled mode which might be called Practical Fencing with the Duelling Sword. This is a style of fencing which excludes all conventions and academic complications. The sole preoccupation of this school is in being able to make the touch first. According to this principle, it happens that where there is a double touch the first hit is considered valid, without taking into consideration the fact that it is very important (and it would be more so in a real duel), *not* to be touched!

Reduced to this simple, excessively simple expres-

sion, fencing is nothing more than a sporting game which is very well received because it is easy to understand and becomes accessible to the beginner after a few weeks of summary preparation. In formulating the program of instruction with reference to the épée, I have taken this fact into consideration. Those who wish to be initiated into the secrets of our art will find useful hints in the following comments suggested by experience and direct observation.

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APPRECIATION¹

IN the fall of 1894, a young fencing master arrived at Vienna and opened a fencing hall at the Annahoff. This was not unusual. During the thirty years in which I followed the evolution of sports, I had witnessed the opening of a number of Salles d' Armes, which in a short time quietly closed their doors. In this case, however, things were quite different, and Luigi Barbasetti would indeed have been entitled to repeat the famous words: "*Veni, vidi, vici.*" In effect, the modern Italian school of fencing, of which he is without any doubt the best qualified exponent, came and triumphed with him. The charming young man, who possessed in a harmonious combination, skill and modesty, such as is becoming to the man who was to be unrivalled, soon made numerous friends and found powerful protectors. The best fencers of Vienna—and of all Austria for that matter—soon realized that they still had much to learn from the young Italian master. In a short time, the fencing hall achieved an enormous success. It became fashionable to frequent the place, and the local fencing masters went there to perfect their methods. Today

¹ It has seemed to us quite opportune to reproduce the preface written for the first German edition of this Method by Mr. Silberer, Proprietor and Director of the *Allgemeine Sports Zeitung* of Vienna.

It is exceedingly interesting on account of the competence and authority of the writer as well as for the references and reminiscences in connection with the success of the master. These references and reminiscences, dear to Barbasetti, offer a contribution of no little importance to the history of fencing, considering that his work in Austria-Hungary was the signal for a marked evolution and for a new era in the art of fencing.

the Salle Barbasetti is the center of reunion of the Viennese aristocracy. Those of his pupils who happened to be officers in the army obtained such brilliant results that the method of the master was the subject of great consideration on the part of the military authorities. The best fencing instructors of the army were officially ordered to frequent the new school. The reason for this remarkable result is to be found in the fact that the man who in the short period of four years, in a foreign land, was able to attain an enviable position and to enjoy such flattering success is, on his own part, an exceptional master. And it is for this reason that I have urged him to set forth the rules of his method in this book, which I offer to the specialists of this weapon. It is true that the noble art cannot be learned from a book, no matter how exceptionally conceived and well written it may be; but this volume presents theories and sets forth many ideas which are of the greatest usefulness in practical fencing. On this account, the book is a valuable asset and a precious guide to all fencers interested in the extraordinary success of the new method. We offer this book to the fencing world with the certainty that its usefulness will be readily recognized and that it will be favorably received.

VICTOR SILBERER

NOTE

THIS treatise, originally written in Italian, was translated into German to be used as a textbook in the Austro-Hungarian Normal Military Fencing School of Wiener-Neustadt, the reorganization of which was intrusted to me in 1895.

I have revised and compared with the original text the present version in English, correcting several errors which had slipped into previous editions.

The strictly didactic form of this manual gives a clear indication of its purpose: to set forth an outline of the Method which has developed hundreds of fencing masters.

This should be taken into consideration by those readers to whom certain descriptions and certain details, which form part of the organic ensemble of the Method, might seem superfluous, being too elementary.

On the other hand, a detailed manual may be useful to all those masters who have an incomplete or superficially didactic knowledge of this very complex weapon, and who realize that their knowledge of foil fencing is not sufficient to enable them to teach sabre fencing also, which is something entirely different.

Amateurs in the use of this weapon will also find useful instruction, if they will take the trouble to analyze it in its practical application.

L. B.

THE ART OF THE SABRE
FIRST PART

INTRODUCTION

FENCING has been defined as primarily the art of parrying. This definition, if not strictly accurate, is at least tenable. In fact, if we go back to the Middle Ages, during which the Italian language was formed, we will observe that the German root *schirm* was used in forming the Italian word *schermire*, from which we get the reflexive verb *schermirsi*, the primitive meaning of which is: "to defend one's self."

In our day we practice fencing according to this conception, which I would call etymological. To be convinced of the truth of this statement, one needs but to witness a bout, during which it will be clear that the principal concern of the two contestants is to parry. Yet no one could deny that the parry is not an immediate consequence of the intention not to attack. The parry is, at best, an action of secondary importance provoked by the attack. Thus the conception people commonly have of fencing assigns a greater importance to the mechanical and passive element of the defense than to the attack, which is a function of intellectual activity and energy. This, of course, is contrary to the spirit of our art. Let us not forget, in fact, that a fencer, even though he possesses a perfect mechanism, will never be developed except through the execution of scientific or reasoned movements, based principally on the theory of the attack.

It is true that in accordance with our conception

of fencing the adversary must be forced into a position where he can do no harm; to accomplish this we believe that the attack is the best means of preventing any action on his part.

The defense, manifesting itself in the parry, as we have stated before, is really nothing more than a simple corrective measure, which, no matter how efficient it may be, remains only a passive factor.

Briefly, our method could be expressed in this sentence: "The best parry is the blow."

After definitely establishing this fundamental principle, it only remains for us to study carefully all the forms of attack which can be recommended and executed against the various defensive tactics.

In the matter of fencing, the following axiom could be set down: If we take two adversaries of the same strength, both possessing a faultless mechanism and both equally decided upon an attack, *the first to attack will touch his adversary*. According to this, in theory, the ideal in fencing would be the total absence of parries. In actual practice, however, these often constitute an excellent means of taking advantage of the errors made by the attacking party.

Experience has shown that parries are instinctive and reflex movements, inherent in human nature;¹ it would be therefore impossible to disregard them, and we must try, after they are properly regulated (since they come to us from the domain of the unknown), to discipline them with great care and scrupulous correc-

¹ It has often been shown that parries are instinctive movements. The following example could be suggested: If you unexpectedly threaten a young child with a cane which menaces his head, he will at once lift his arms in order to parry.

tion so that they may become an integral part of our art. It is indeed of the greatest importance that we take advantage in this manner, of natural gifts, of instinctive movements . . . and this study of parries will be more profitable to the fencer who has the talent and the presence of mind to execute them spontaneously.

In our art, the head, or in other words the tactical sense, must constantly direct the action, and the imagination must continually be at work to discover new means of attack adequate to meet the play of the adversary, inspired by his weaknesses and taking advantage of them.

It should not be assumed, we must repeat, that the attack excludes the parry: perhaps the latter constitutes the best form of offensive which does not depend on any particular method, but is an improvised action intended as a surprise for the adversary. In this manner we arrive at a definition of the practice of arms which does not consider fencing as consisting of the simple theory of the attack, in the ideal sense, and at the same time does not base all of the art on the parry, according to the false and purely empirical conception mentioned in the first part of this chapter.

In the art of practicing and studying fencing, it must be taken into consideration that the theoretical formulas are so rigid that they often interfere with the progress of the pupil. Theory does not take into consideration the physical qualifications of each individual, where different mechanisms conceal certain qualities in some fencers and certain defects in others.

It is therefore necessary to use a certain amount of

elasticity in the application of general principles, which a good master must adapt with tact, taking into consideration the differences of temperament.

It is an error, in our opinion, to try to surmount by means of study, the power of natural gifts; it is also an error to believe that it is indispensable to correct at once and completely all the defects of a beginner. It is only by gradual progress that the bad habits disappear little by little while the fencer acquires increased ability.

He who tries to teach, without regard for the conformation and the aptitude of the pupil, makes a lamentable mistake.

Since we have mentioned the instructor, let us add that he should not be satisfied with the knowledge of the strength and physical powers of his pupil; his first and most important preoccupation should be to discover the pupil's aptitudes, which are clearly manifest by a very visible preference for the attack or for the defense.

This ends the rapid exposition of the doctrines of this method. We shall now take up the technical part of sabre fencing, which is very complex. We shall study in detail the different movements, forming in their ensemble—if it is possible to express our thought in these words—the structure of each possible action on the part of the fencer.

CHAPTER I

1. SABRE FENCING

SABRE fencing is incomparably more difficult than *épée* fencing.

Sabre fencing comprises not only the thrusts, which are proper to the play of the *épée*, but also cutting blows with the edge of the blade of the weapon, which require the execution of several varied movements.

What are the qualifications which a sabre fencer should have?

Poise, speed, and absolute accuracy in the blows with the cutting edge.

The muscles must act simultaneously or successively without the slightest discomfort, and in order to accomplish this it is necessary to prepare them with exercises tending to produce strength and suppleness.

The manner in which the sabre is held is of capital importance if the blade is to be directed with authority and precision. He who holds the weapon in such fashion that the point is haphazardly directed, will never learn to fence.

The fencer who desires to acquire worthwhile qualifications must therefore practice patiently and with perseverance the movements which give precision, and this study must be prolonged until the fencer performs them correctly, without strain, and almost instinctively.

After the fencer no longer has to worry about the matter of the arm and of the hand, he should try to

learn to touch exactly the chosen place at the opportune moment.

This elementary theoretical and practical preparation is subdivided into three parts:

The first, which develops the mechanism, is a preparation for the second and permits the fencer to respond to all demands of the attack and the defense, bringing into play the physical qualities already acquired and taking advantage of them. In the third part, the fencer must try to find out by himself, how to take advantage of his natural gifts.

2. THE PARTS OF THE SABRE

The sabre is composed of two parts: the Hilt and the Blade.

The rôle of the hilt is to direct the blade and to protect the hand; it is divided into the following parts:

1. The Metal Guard, hemispherical in form.
2. The Grip.

The blade proper is slightly curved and measures about 88 centimeters ($34\frac{1}{2}$ inches), in length; it is stronger in its lower part, that is, near the guard, and progressively diminishes in thickness toward the point. It is made of a supple, resilient metal and its general division is as follows:

1. The Forte which is the part of the blade nearest to the guard;
2. The Middle which like the Forte is used in the parries;
3. The Foible or far end of the blade used in cutting.

In the blade there are still the following subdivisions:

- (a) The point, which is blunt in the practice sabres.

(b) The cutting edge, from the point to the end of the blade near the guard.

(c) The reverse cutting edge, starting from the point and running through the foible of the blade.

(d) The gutters or grooves, cut in the flat surface of the blade with the object of reducing the weight of the weapon.

(e) The back of the blade on the opposite side of the cutting edge is the thickest part of it.

(f) The heel, in the form of a parallelepiped, which is attached to the guard.

The blade proper is attached to the grip by means of the tongue, which ends in a threaded portion to which the pommel is attached.

A well-mounted sabre should be well-balanced, easy to handle and to point in every direction and should produce no strain on the hand during the involuntary oscillations of the weapon.

In short, there should be no difficulty in the way of executing any movement.

The centre of gravity of a sabre having all these specifications is usually located at about five centimeters (2 inches) from the guard, and its weight should not be less than 500 grams (17 ounces).

3. HOLDING THE SABRE

It is of the utmost importance to hold the sabre properly, in order to insure absolute precision in handling the weapon.

Experience has shown that it is impossible to deliver a blow with accuracy unless the fencer possesses the most delicate sense of each position.

The muscular efforts must coincide absolutely with the "fingering," which is of great assistance in the success of these movements; but this result is not obtained unless the sabre is held in such a way that the handle rests on three points of the hand.

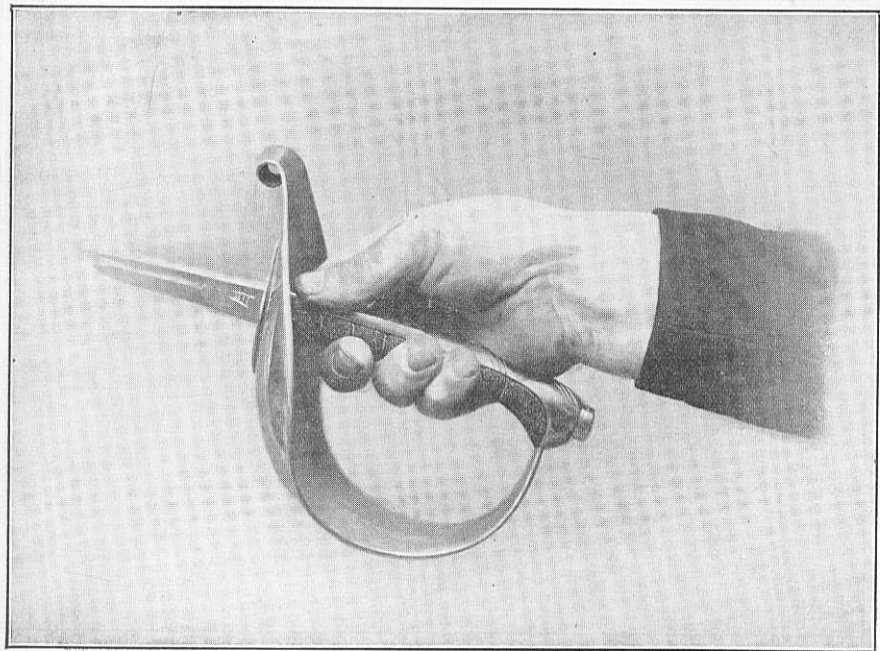
A special study of the movements of the hand will soon give the fencer—if the sabre is properly held—the delicacy of touch and the assurance, which the Italian school describes with the word "*pasteggio*." This word, which could be translated into English as "fingering," expresses the possibility of giving the sabre at each moment the desired position, with full control and mastery of the blade.

The sabre must be held in the following manner: place the second phalanx of the four fingers opposing the thumb, directly against the interior of the grip, your index finger close to the guard; let the lower part of the back of the grip rest against the palm of your hand and apply the thumb against the flat part of the back of the grip near the guard.

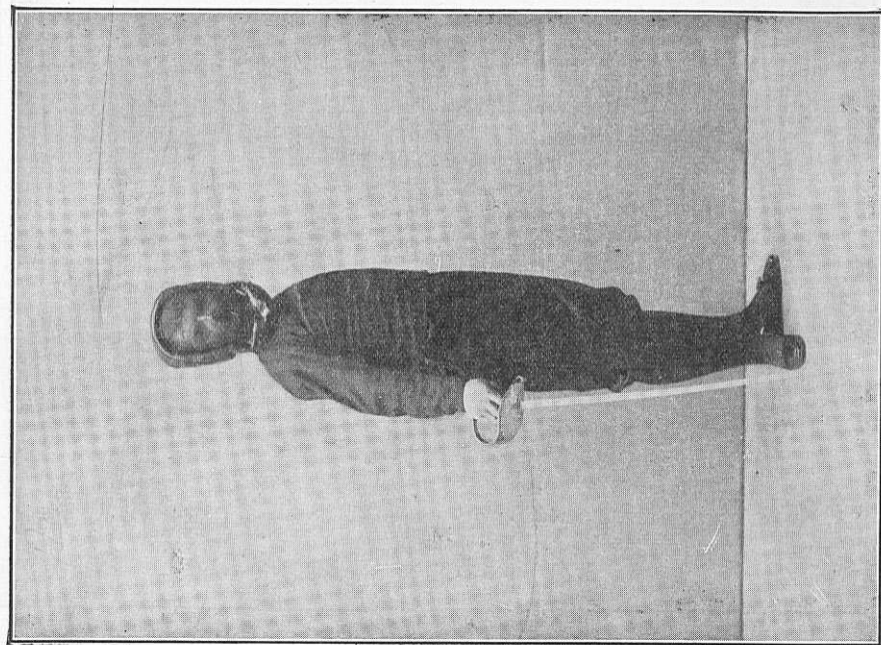
Having these two opposite points of contact, the point of the blade can be smoothly directed in a circular line, the pivotal point being located on the palm of the hand.

The three points controlling the direction of the blade in the space are: the one against which the index finger acts, the one under the thumb, and the surface of contact between the grip and the palm of the hand.

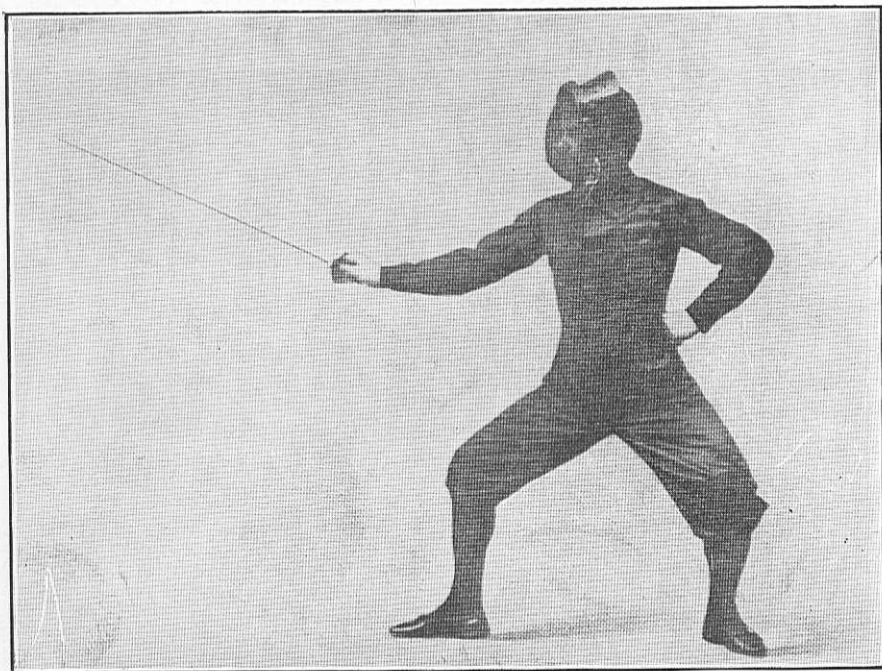
This manner of holding the sabre is indeed a little difficult for the uninitiated, but you will soon discover that there is no other which will offer the same ad-



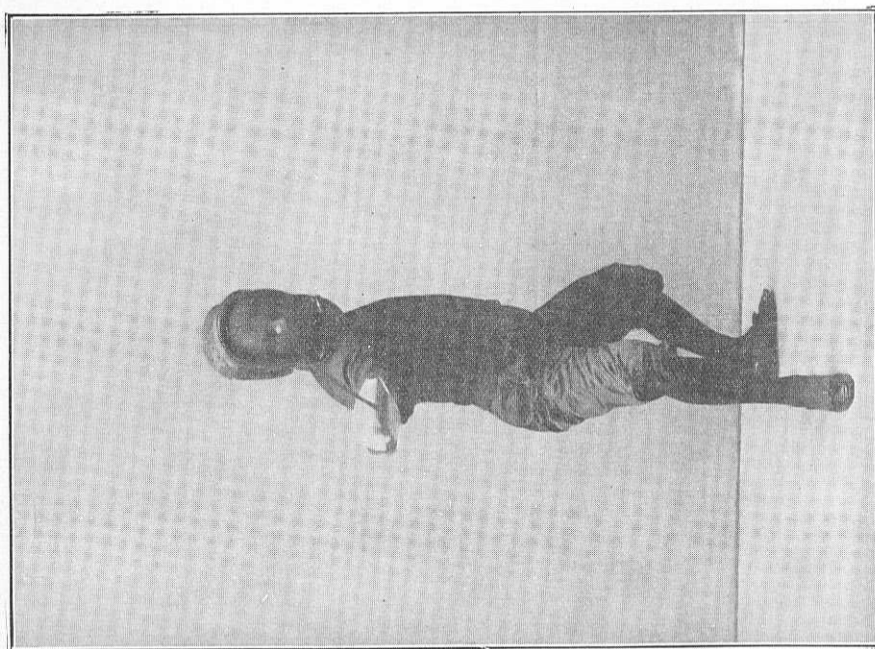
(Fig. 1)



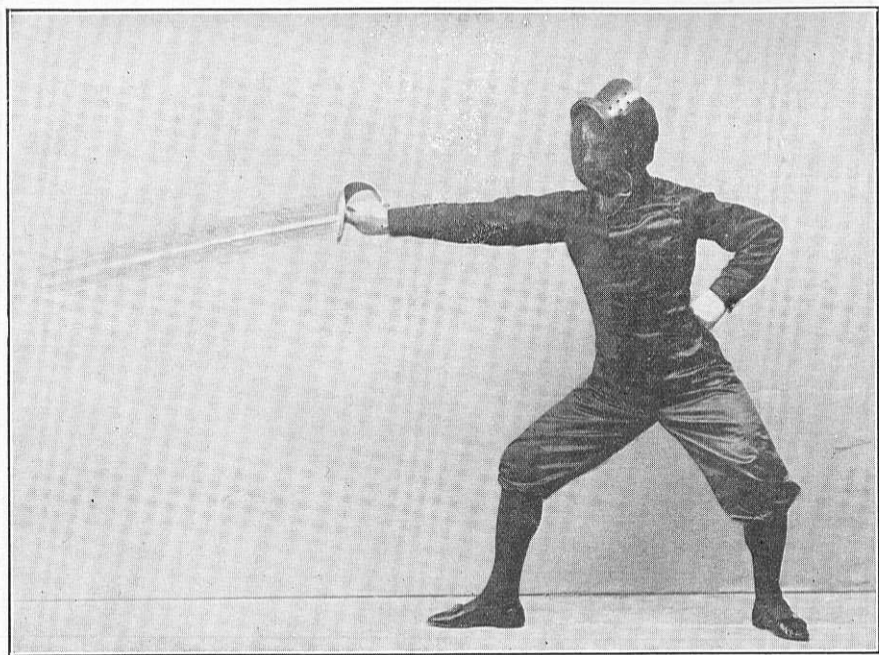
(Fig. 2)



(Fig. 4)



(Fig. 3)



(Figs. 5 and 12)



(Fig. 6)



(Fig. 7)



(Figs. 8 and 14)

vantages. Thanks to this grip, you will be able to develop the greatest resistance against the blows of your adversary, and a formidable authority in your own attacks.

This position gives the sabre a free and easy balance, which becomes very powerful, while the elbow is used as a pivotal point for a circular movement.

In order to direct the weapon properly, all the muscles of the arm must come into play, but the center of each movement must be your elbow,¹ the hand and the shoulder playing secondary rôles. The different movements of the shoulder have, however, their own usefulness. The hand serves only for the direction of the weapon, that is, of the blade.

4. PREPARATION FOR THE SALUTE OR THE FIRST POSITION

You take the First Position as follows:

Present your right side to your opponent, the body erect, head raised, left shoulder well drawn back; the legs straight without stiffness, heels together, the right toe pointing toward your adversary and the feet forming an angle of about 100°.

The weapon must be held as an extension of the arm, the point raised one or two inches from the floor, edge of blade to your right. The left arm is bent at the elbow and the left fist rests upon the hip (Fig. 2).

From this position the salute is executed.

¹ The Italian method absolutely rests upon this principle: the elbow is the center of all motion. This principle is also established at the Masters' School of Rome. In actual practice, however, the joint of the wrist becomes rather important.

5. THE SALUTE

In order to execute the salute, raise your right arm level with your shoulder, the cutting edge of the blade always to the right.

(a) *Salute to your Opponent*.—Bend your arm at the elbow, drawing the upper part of the arm to the body, and carrying the blade perpendicularly past the right eye, cutting edge to the left.

Lower the point of the blade horizontally toward your opponent, keeping edge of blade to your left.

(b) *Salute to the Spectators at the Left*.—Raise the blade as before and extend your arm horizontally again, but toward the left, keeping the edge of the blade also to the left.

(c) *Salute to the Spectators at the Right*.—Raise the weapon as before, and lower it horizontally to your right, but this time turning the edge of your blade to the right.

After the salute, you again take the First Position.

During the execution of these movements the forearm and the weapon must form one single straight line.

You must naturally look toward the place you are saluting, your body following with elegance the movements of the weapon.

6. THE GUARD

A fencer well on guard should be able to execute with ease all the different movements of attack and defense.

In order to perform the movements of attack with facility, you must take a correct and rational guard,

since these movements demand great speed and stretching.

The body must be placed in such a position that all of its muscles can act with the greatest speed and ease.

All fencing actions develop from the position of the guard. On this account—we insist again—it is of the utmost importance to assume a “natural” position, which will give you complete assurance and poise.

From the First Position you go into the guard position in two movements:

1. By means of a shoulder movement, place your sabre in line, cutting edge of the blade to the right.

2. Bend your knees so that the left one is perpendicularly over the point of your left foot and the right one perpendicularly over the right heel. Place your right foot forward, about two foot-lengths in a straight line; at the same time, for the guard of Tierce (Figs. 3 and 4) bend the arm, placing the blade in a diagonal position, the point raised to the height of your opponent's eyes, the cutting edge in a diagonal line to the right.

For the guard of Seconde, direct the point toward your opponent's hip, the sabre in line as an extension of the arm, the cutting edge of the blade in a diagonal line to the right.

The right foot advances, following an imaginary line which would pass through the two points of contact of both opponent's heels; this line is called the *line of direction*.¹

¹ The left foot rests flat as already indicated for the First Position, forming an angle of 100° with the line of direction.

These two guards are constantly used; the guard of Tierce for the high line and the guard of Seconde for the low line.

The guard of Tierce is particularly indicated during the lesson, but generally you take the guard of Seconde for the assault.

In order to enable the pupil to take the position of the guard easily and correctly, it will be convenient to make him repeat the second movement, specially stressing the fact that the weight of the body must not be supported by the right leg. Thus the right foot is left free to move forward in the advance or in the lunge.¹

In order to possess a faultless guard, you must comply with the following essentials:

Your left knee should be perpendicularly over the point of the left foot, and your right knee perpendicularly over the right heel. The legs are bent at the knees at an angle of 120°. The upper part of the body is inclined slightly forward, the small of the back is hollowed and your shoulders are in a horizontal line with the sabre. The weight of your body rests rather on your left leg, so that the right leg may be free to move easily in the case of an advance or a lunge. The shoulders and the stomach are drawn back, and your body is in profile.

¹ Most fencing manuals recommend an equal division of the weight of the body on both legs. We consider this injurious in practice, for when the right foot is moved forward, the right leg should be hampered as little as possible.

However, when the right leg has to carry a large portion of the body weight, it will be necessary to transfer that weight to the left leg before starting the lunge. This movement involves a delay and also warns your opponent. Both factors are bound to reduce the chances of eventual success.

7. RESTING POSITION

From the guard you pass to the position of rest, bringing the heels together at the same time that you raise your body to a standing position, always keeping your sabre in line.

By a second movement the sabre is brought near the left elbow, and finally the right fist is held by the left hand. In this position it is permissible to change the position of the feet, but you must try not to let the point of your blade touch the floor.

8. THE TARGET

In the artistic assault, the only valid touches are those which are made above the line of the hips, including arm and head.

You are forbidden wilfully to strike with thrust or cut the lower part of the abdomen.

Two lines should be distinguished: the high line comprising the arm and the upper parts of the body, and the low line starting from under the arm.

There are also the interior and exterior lines, respectively located inside and outside of your opponent's arm.

9. THE DISTANCE

The distance is the space separating two opponents.

Medium distance is the space which makes it necessary for you to lunge in order to touch your opponent.

Normal distance is that which requires a step forward before you lunge, so as to bring you within striking distance.

If the distance is greater than the normal measure of separation, it is called long distance; if shorter than the medium distance of separation, we call it close distance. (In this case, the two opponents can touch each other without lunging.)

It is very important for the fencer to acquire the habit of accurately judging the distance which separates him from his adversary.

It is also of the utmost importance to learn by constant practice to parry at close quarters, so as to be able to defend yourself effectively if forced into this position during the combat.

You will hardly attain these accomplishments without long study in the fencing hall, where the movements must be executed with minute precision.

As far as the attacks are concerned, these must always be executed lunging.

Before taking the position of the guard, extend your arm, blade in line. The opponents will be at normal distance when they take the position of the guard, if preparatory to this, they stand up, heels together, arms extended, points of blades touching each other.

When taking the guard, it is preferable to fall back a little too far than to come too close to your opponent, in order to avoid the surprise of a sudden and violent attack, which is perfectly valid according to the rules of sabre fencing.¹

¹ Italian fencers always fall back on guard at a distance out of the reach of the opponent. It is not customary in Italy, as it is in France, especially in foil play, to cross blades before starting the action. As soon as a fencer gets down on his legs, he is considered to be on guard and may be attacked at once.

10. THE ADVANCE

From the position of the guard you may advance by steps, placing the right foot forward along the line of direction. The length of each step will vary according to the circumstances. The left foot follows immediately after, and is brought forward to regain the distance widened by the advance of the right foot. Both feet must travel exactly the same distance so as to maintain the correct position of the guard. In order to avoid slipping and to attain a firm hold, it is advisable to tap lightly when your foot touches the floor.

The right foot in every case must be raised as little as possible from the floor; it may even be said that the heel must graze the floor.

Under no circumstance should you bring the point of your foot heavily upon the floor.

We must also state that it is very important to keep the knees well apart.

The movement of the legs is caused by the displacement of the feet, which are compelled to travel by the impulsion of the femoral muscles; a preliminary flexion of the knee is annoying, and this defect is found in beginners and among those who disregard the importance of not warning your opponent by any involuntary movement, at the moment of the attack. This also causes a loss of time, which retards the action.

And in conclusion, it is equally important to see that the left knee is not extended before the advance; because in this case the weight of the body would be supported by the right leg, and the balance being upset would cause an additional delay in the attack.

11. THE RETREAT

In order to retreat, proceed as follows:

Without disturbing the guard in the least, take a rapid step back with your left foot, which must be followed by the right one immediately after, with a light tap, re-establishing the correct distance.

Both during the advance and the retreat, you must endeavor to keep your heels at the usual distance in order to avoid any change in the opening of the guard.

Whether you step backward or forward, the movements of the body should be performed smoothly and evenly, never jerkily or unsteadily.

12. THE JUMP BACKWARD

The jump backward is executed as follows:

Bend the body backward, throwing back the head also, while passing the right foot behind the left one to a distance of about 20 inches; finally retaking the guard, crouching upon your legs.

This exercise requires a great deal of study. In order to execute it successfully, it is necessary to repeat it until the legs are trained and the body accustomed to maintain a perfect equilibrium.

Nevertheless, this action is very useful. It enables you to touch your opponent in the arm at the start of his attack.

13. THE LUNGE

The lunge is without doubt the most energetic action in fencing.

It is executed as follows:

Vigourously extend your left leg, stretching out your right arm; at the same time advance your right foot to a distance of about 20 inches, keeping the sole of the left one flat on the floor. (Fig. 6).

The lunge demands a rapid displacement of the body. At the moment that your right foot touches the floor, after having grazed its surface during the whole length of its journey, your body must also have completed its movement and come to rest.

The execution of the lunge depends entirely upon the action of the legs; the body is simply inclined forward with a swift movement, while the shoulders remain almost on the same level and the right knee is placed vertically over the heel.¹

Here it is necessary to remember that the weight of the body must not bear too heavily upon the right leg: if your torso remains in equilibrium it will be easier for you to return to the position of the guard more rapidly. At this moment you must seek to protect your arm, the body having time to avoid the riposte.

It is well to add that the lunge must be executed from the medium distance, and that only from this position is it possible to touch your opponent.

The lunge must be performed in one single tempo with the speed of an arrow. The sense of distance will help you to estimate how far you must advance your right foot in order to touch your opponent.

¹ Many authors have recommended executing the lunge by inclining the body forward to such an extent that the chest almost touches the thigh. By this method the reach of your attack may be increased; but if your opponent is successful in his parry, it will be very difficult for you to recover the guard position rapidly. In effect, it is necessary to relieve the right leg of weight by throwing back your body, and this waste of time allows your opponent to try a riposte.

We advise you to maintain a good distance and to lengthen your lunge, always recovering the position of the guard as rapidly as possible.²

14. THE RECOVERY FROM THE LUNGE TO THE POSITION OF THE GUARD

The object of the lunge quickly executed is to forestall, if possible, your opponent's parry. But by a quick recovery to the position of the guard you can at least try to avoid his riposte. This theory is particularly cogent when your adversary is slow in his reaction.

It is necessary for you to be certain of your speed in recovering the position of the guard; for then you may lunge with a degree of confidence equal to your facility for retreating.

In order to recover from the lunge, you must reverse all the movements of the attack.

The first action is to bend your left leg, which by a lever action pulls back the weight of your body and brings the right foot to its original position.

The lunge and the recovery to the position of the guard require a great deal of study.

You must execute these movements in perfect form.

The more you increase the speed of your lunge and recovery, the simpler and more powerful your sabre play will be.

² If you are separated from your opponent by the long distance, the longer your step to shorten the distance, the shorter your lunge will have to be.

CHAPTER II

15. POSITIONS OF THE HAND

THERE are six positions for the hand, which are as follows:

First Position.—With the point in line of attack, turn your arm to the left until the cutting edge points upward, nail of thumb downward and the nails of the other fingers to the right.

Second Position.—From the First Position describe a curve of 90° , turning your arm toward the right, so that the cutting edge points to the right, nail of thumb to the left, and rest of nails downward.

Third Position.—Turn your arm another 90° to the right until the cutting edge points to the ground, nail of thumb upward, and rest of the nails to the left.

Fourth Position.—Turn your arm another 90° to the right so that cutting edge points to the left, nail of thumb to the right and rest of nails upward.

Fifth Position.—This position is located at a point halfway between the Third and Fourth Positions.

Sixth Position.—This position is located at a point halfway between the Second and Third Positions.

The First and the last two Positions are employed in the execution of the parries; the other three are fundamental in the execution of the cuts.

16. MOVEMENTS FOR STUDY (MOLINELLI)

In order to attain poise, speed and precision in

handling the sabre, it will be necessary for you to pay close attention to the proper execution of the oscillatory movements.

The molinelli not only may be considered as the foundation of the instruction in sabre fencing, but they should constitute a daily exercise for you even if you are no longer a beginner. By practicing these movements regularly, you will strengthen the muscles of your arm and develop hand control and assurance. In addition, these movements are a very hygienic exercise.

Molinelli, in other words, are oscillations of the blade in different directions, intended to develop precision of aim in the cuts.

There are several kinds of molinelli:

1. Cuts to the head, directed to the top of the adversary's skull.
2. Cuts to the flank or to the abdomen.
3. Cuts to the right or the left sides of the face.

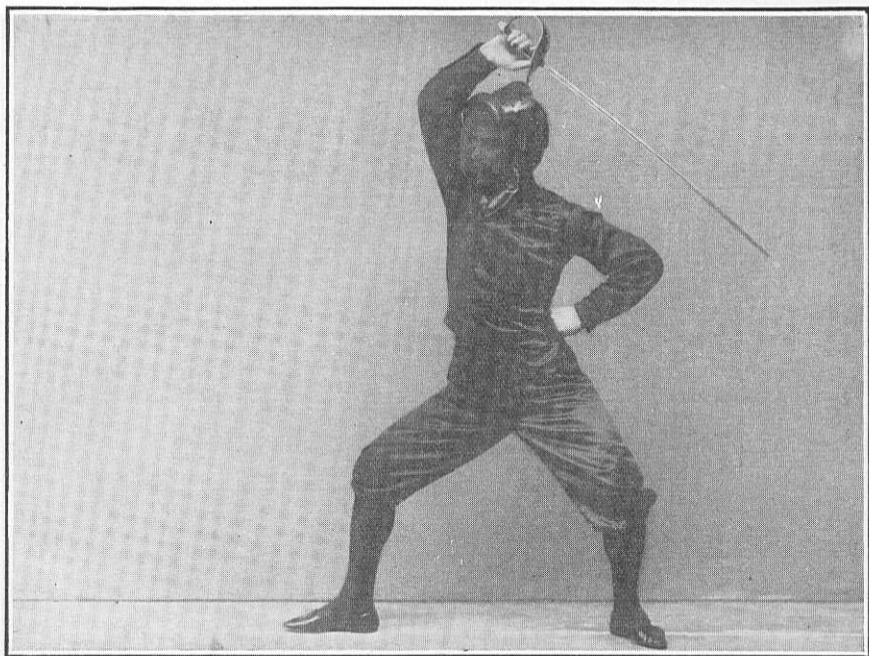
All cuts are named after the part of the adversary's body you use as a target.

17. CUT TO THE HEAD BY MOLINELLO COMING FROM THE LEFT

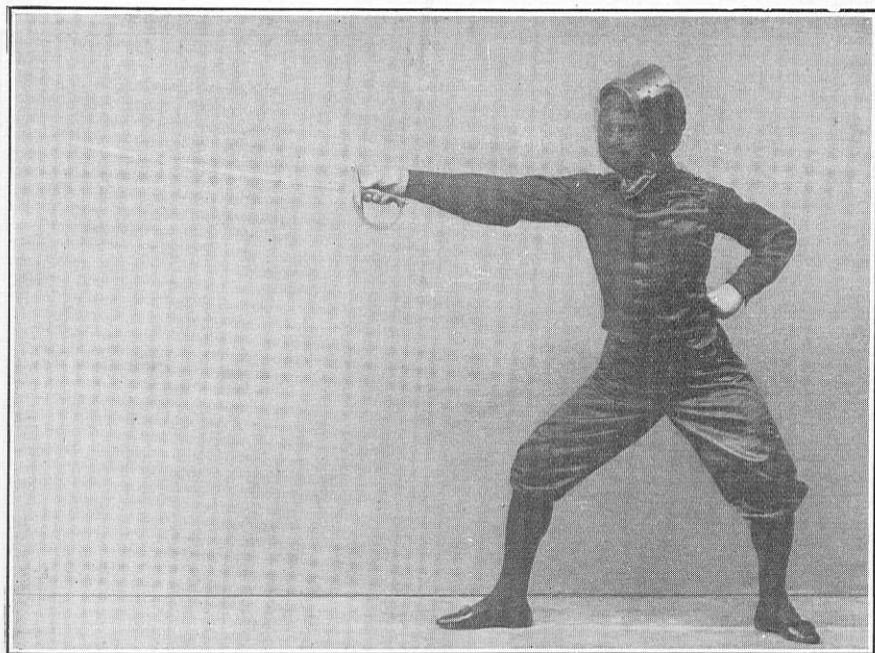
In the beginning this molinello should be divided into three movements:

1. Place sabre in line with your hand in First Position (Fig. 7).
2. Lower the point of your blade and describe with it a circle passing at the left of your body¹ (Fig. 9).

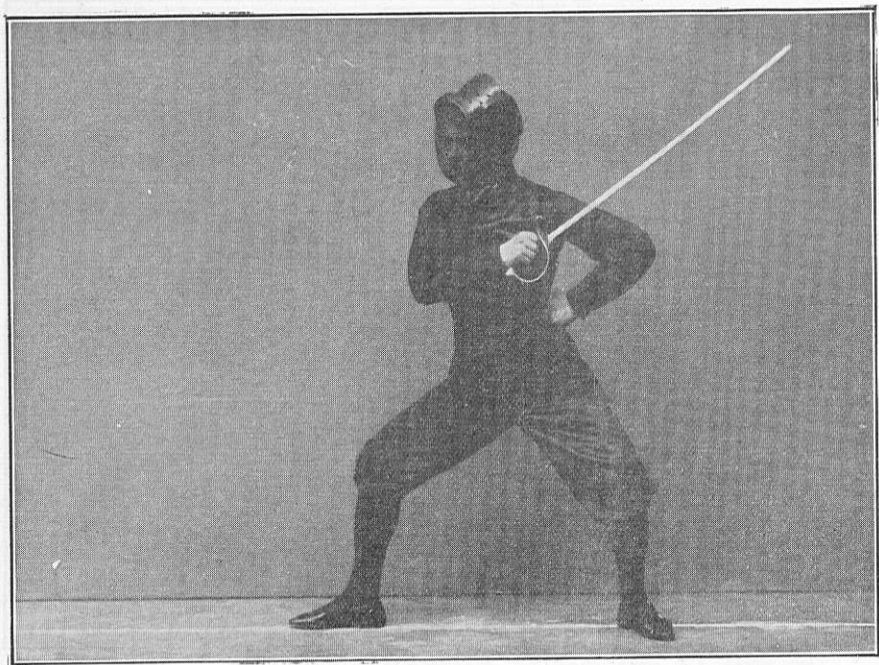
¹ Very important: This movement must be executed by the forearm, using the elbow as a pivot. There should be as little bending as possible at the wrist.



(Fig. 9)



(Fig. 10)



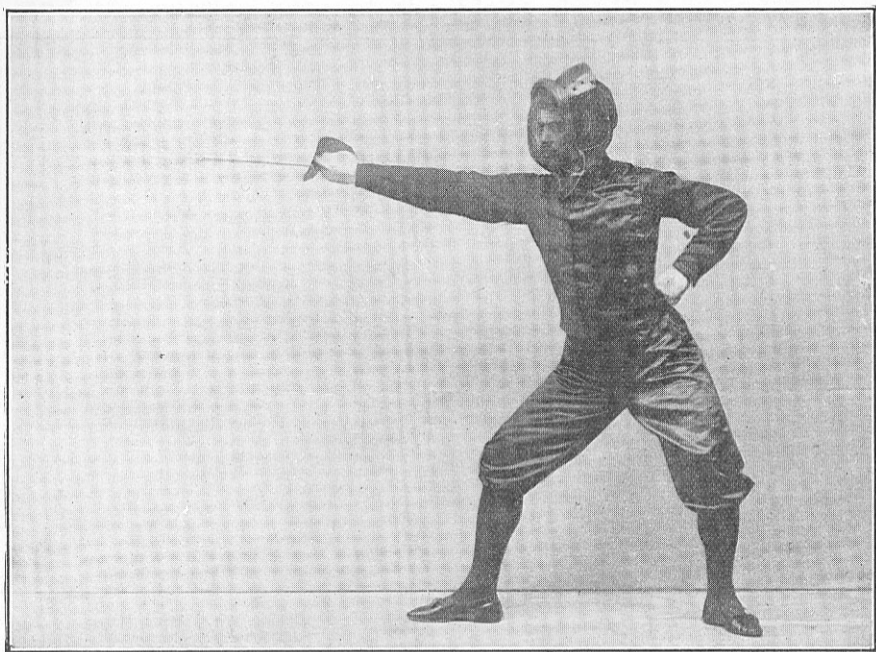
(Fig. 11)
(Fig. 12 same as Fig. 5)



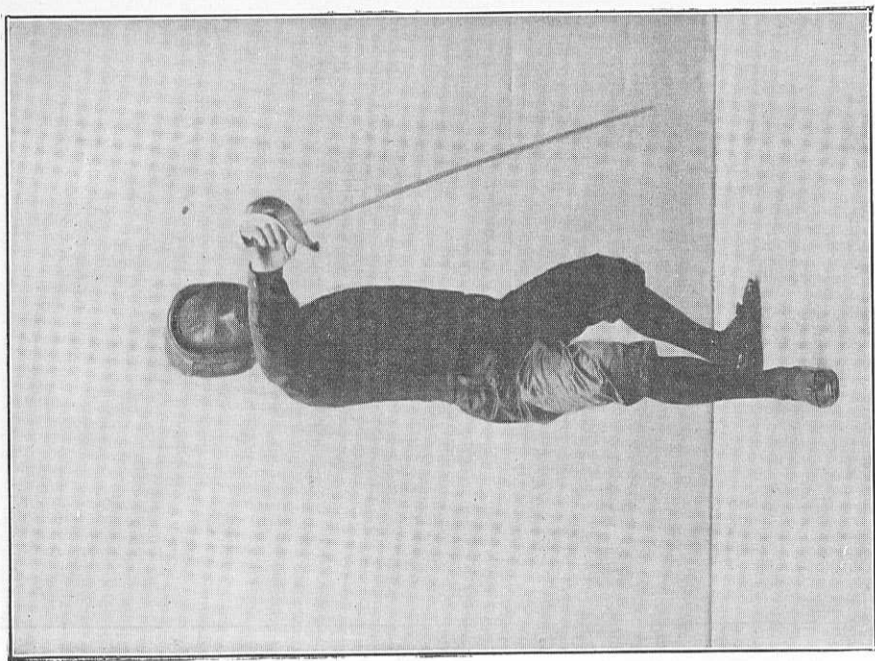
(Fig. 13)
(Fig. 14 same as Fig. 8)



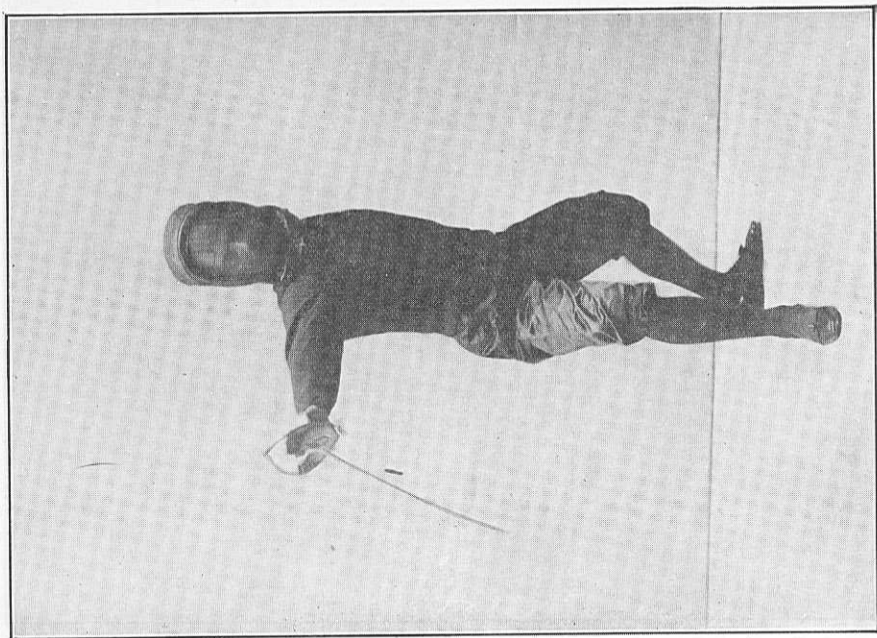
(Fig. 15)



(Fig. 16)



(Fig. 17)



(Fig. 18)

3. Continue the rotating movement of the point, keeping the blade in the same plane. The circumference will be completed when your hand, placed in the Third Position, brings the blade to strike the head of your adversary (Fig. 10).

18. CUT TO THE HEAD BY MOLINELLO COMING FROM THE RIGHT

There are also three movements in the execution of this molinello:

1. Place the arm in the Fourth Position (Fig. 8).
2. Lower the point to the right describing a circle by a retrograde movement, bringing into play the joint of the shoulder and drawing in the small of your back until the blade, by reason of the elevation of the elbow, is located behind the right side of your head. Your forearm at this moment should be parallel to the shoulders and the cutting edge of the blade should be in the rear (Fig. 9).
3. Finally, bring forward the sabre very rapidly, using the elbow as a pivot.

19. MOLINELLO TO THE FLANK

This molinello is executed starting from the left and is divided into two movements:

1. Take the final position of the molinello to the head (Fig. 10), and then describe backward with the point, half a circle, bending the arm at the elbow in such manner that your right hand will come near your left shoulder. The blade at this moment will have a horizontal position, cutting edge to the left (Fig. 11).

2. In order to finish the movement, bring the sabre forward, passing the blade in front of your legs until the cutting edge—now turned to the right—strikes the flank of your adversary (Figs. 5 and 12).

20. MOLINELLO TO THE ABDOMEN

This molinello is composed of two movements:

1. Starting from the final position of the molinello to the head (Fig. 10), describe backwards with the point half a circle, until your forearm is in a horizontal position (Fig. 13).

2. Continue this movement, hollowing the small of your back, raising the elbow as much as possible, in order to describe forward with your blade another half a circle and deliver a horizontal cut to the abdomen of your opponent (Figs. 8 and 14).

21. MOLINELLO TO THE FACE

This molinello, except for the second movement, does not differ from the molinelli to the flank and to the abdomen.

- (a) The molinello coming from the left must finish by a cut to the right cheek of the adversary (Figs. 15 and 16).
- (b) The molinello to the face, directed to the left cheek of the adversary, is executed in very much the same manner as the molinello to the abdomen (Figs. 13 and 14).

These two cuts must be delivered horizontally.

REMARKS

After mastering these movements in detail, you must practice them in ensemble. It is of the utmost importance that you avoid a wavering of the blade in order to increase your speed in the execution of these exercises. The final movement, which brings the weapon near the target, must be executed with the greatest possible rapidity.

You must hold your weapon securely after the touch is made.

Molinelli are properly executed when your weapon acts as regularly as a pendulum.

Force must play a very small part in the delivery of these blows; thus your fingers must tighten their grip on the handle of the weapon progressively, not completing their grip until the moment the blade touches the target.

It is opportune to repeat here that molinelli are the fundamental exercises in sabre fencing.

The attacks and the parries are nothing but movements derived from the first principles.

The more you master the molinelli, the easier it will be for you to learn to attack and to parry.

In the beginning, you must practice the molinelli with heels together, so as to be able to concentrate on the direction of the blade. Afterward you must practice these exercises advancing, retreating and lunging.

22. INVITATIONS

Any movement or attitude, which induces your

adversary to introduce his attack in a desired line, is called an *invitation*.

Invitations are made by engaging the blades or by opening certain lines, according to the distance which separates the adversaries.

If the blades are in contact the invitations are called *engagements*.

Invitations are made in the lines of *Prime*, *Seconde*, *Tierce*, *Quarte* and *Quinte*.

It is also possible to make an invitation by placing your point in line of attack, provoking in this manner an action against your blade.

(a) *Invitation in Prime*.—From the guard of *Tierce*: lower the point of your blade to the left at the same time raising the elbow and the fist to the height of your shoulder.

In executing this movement, it is necessary to turn the arm so that the cutting edge will be directed upward and to the left.

You may easily bend your arm and bring the blade as far as possible in the direction of your left armpit.

This invitation¹ leads your adversary to attack you in the flank and toward the upper part of your arm (Fig. 17).

(b) *Invitation in Seconde*.—From the invitation in *Prime* you may easily pass to that of *Seconde*.

Move arm to the right in such a manner that the point of your blade will be directed to a spot a little lower than your adversary's flank, keeping your hand in the Second Position.

¹ This invitation is not very practical and is seldom used, but has some advantages against a left-handed fencer.

The arm is extended so as to form a straight line from the shoulder to the end of the blade.

This invitation offers a target to all attacks, with the exception of those to the flank (Fig. 18).

(c) *Invitation in Tierce*.—The only difference between this invitation and the guard of Tierce is that in the first the point of your blade is directed a little further to the right.

This invitation offers your opponent the opportunity to attack you in all lines, excepting the right side of your face and the outer side of your arm (Fig. 19).

(d) *Invitation in Quarte*.—From the invitation in Tierce, bring your arm to the left, turning the cutting edge of your blade to the same side. The hand is placed a little above the height of the waist. The point is on a level with your opponent's eyes, but a little to the left.

This invitation leaves you open to all attacks excepting those directed to the left side of your body (Fig. 20).

(e) *Invitation in Quinte*.—Bring the sabre a little above your head so as to protect it with the blade.

In order to accomplish this, raise the elbow turning the arm in order to direct the cutting edge upward. The blade will be horizontal but effecting a diagonal forward position; the arm is slightly bent and the hand is placed to the right of your head (Fig. 20).

23. THE ENGAGEMENTS

The object of the engagements is to force your adversary to attack in a desired line.

The engagements differ from the invitations in that

the first are executed by establishing contact with the adverse blade.

The object of this contact is to deflect your opponent's blade from the line, using as much pressure as you can against it, applying the forte of your blade to the foible of his.

Engagements, like invitations, can be executed in the lines of Prime, Seconde, Tierce, Quarte and Quinte.