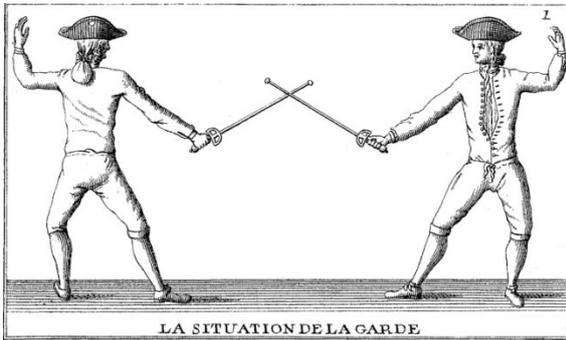


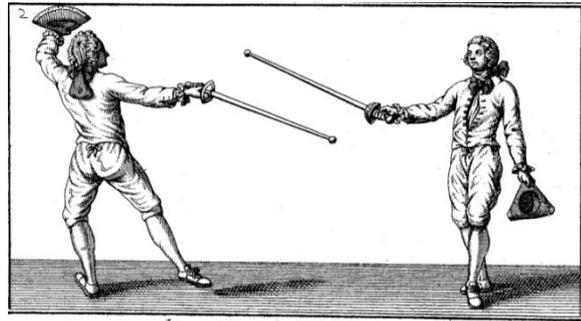
# The Exercise of Arms or Management of the Foil

by Coudray Le Perche, Paris, 1676 [attrib.\*]

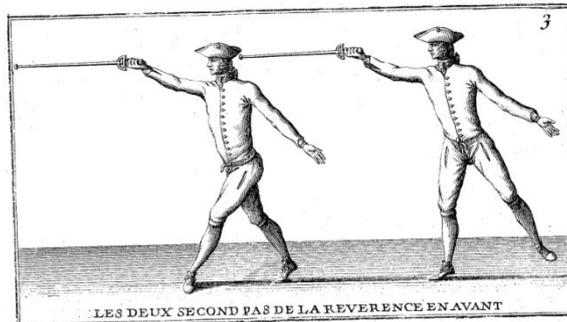
Translation by Philip T. Crawley, 2016



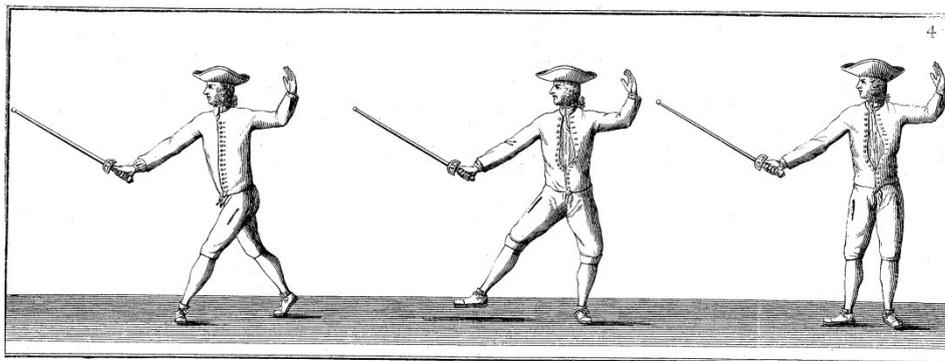
1. The guard position



2. To make the salute well



3. Both of the second steps of the salute forward



4. The three steps for approaching the enemy

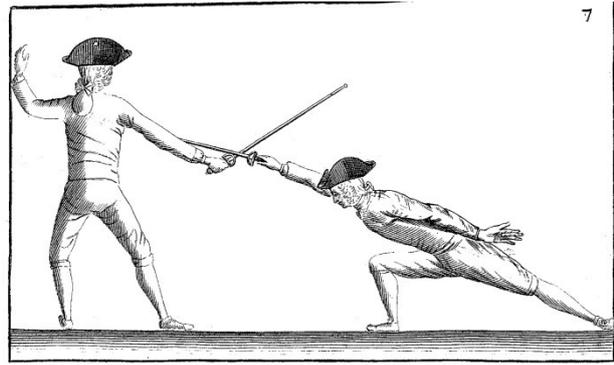


5. The three retreats for going away from the enemy



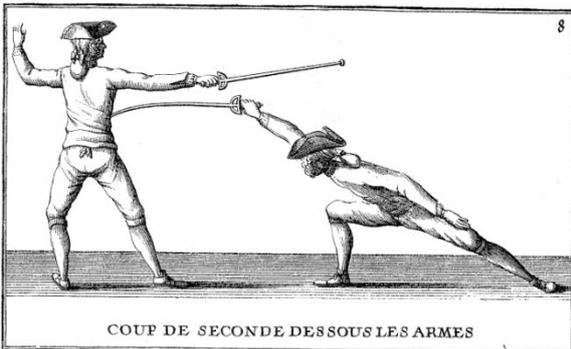
COUP DE QUARTE A UEDANS DES ARMES

6. Attack of quarte inside the arm



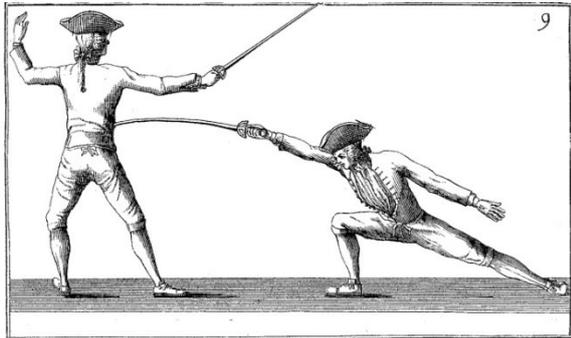
COUP DE TIERCE DEHORS DES ARMES

7. Attack of tierce outside the arm



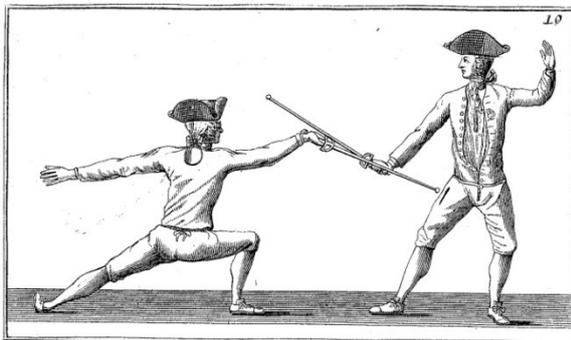
COUP DE SECONDE DES SOUS LES ARMES

8. Attack of seconde under the arm



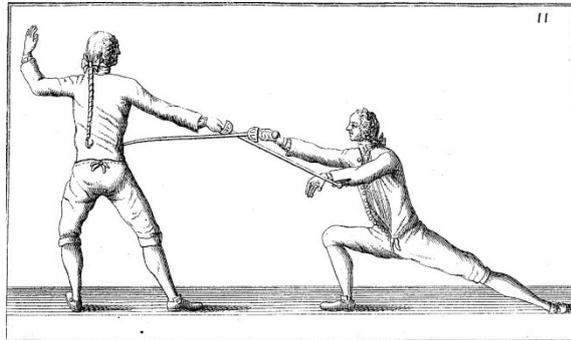
COUP DE QUARTE COUPEE DONNE

9. Attack of quarte given



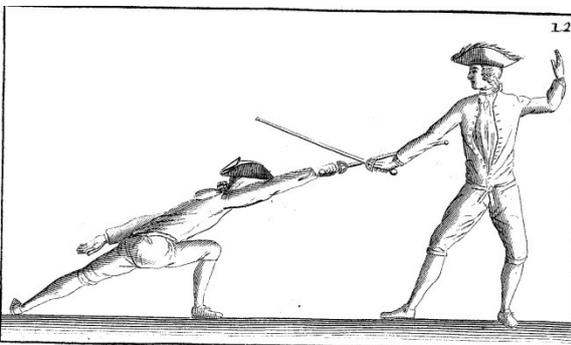
COUP DE QUARTE PARE

10. Attack of quarte parried



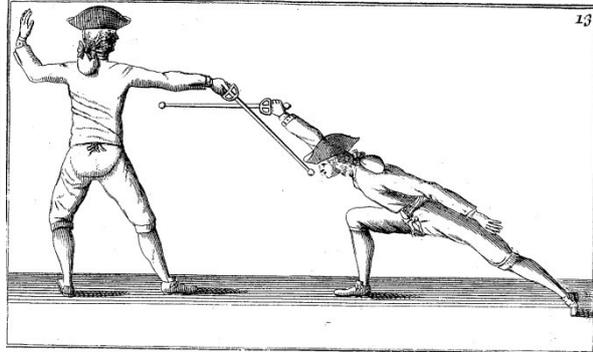
Paris Chez M. Bonnart rue St Jacques à l'aigle. COUP DE FLANCONADE

11. Attack of the Flanconade



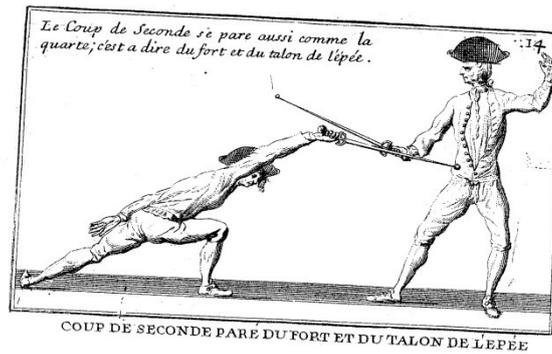
COUP DE TIERCE PARE

12. Attack of tierce parried



COUP DE SECONDE PARE DU CERCLE

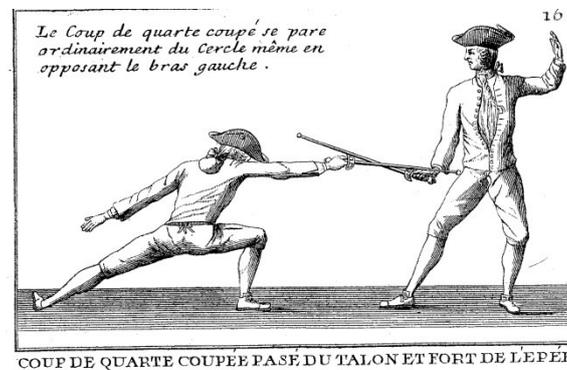
13. Attack of seconde parried with circle



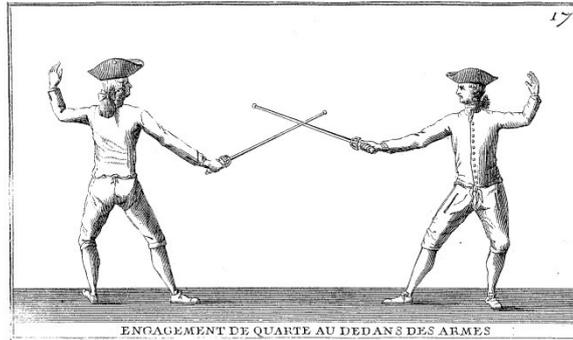
14. The attack of seconde is also parried with quarte; that is to say with the strong and heel of the sword. Attack of seconde parried with the strong and heel of the sword.



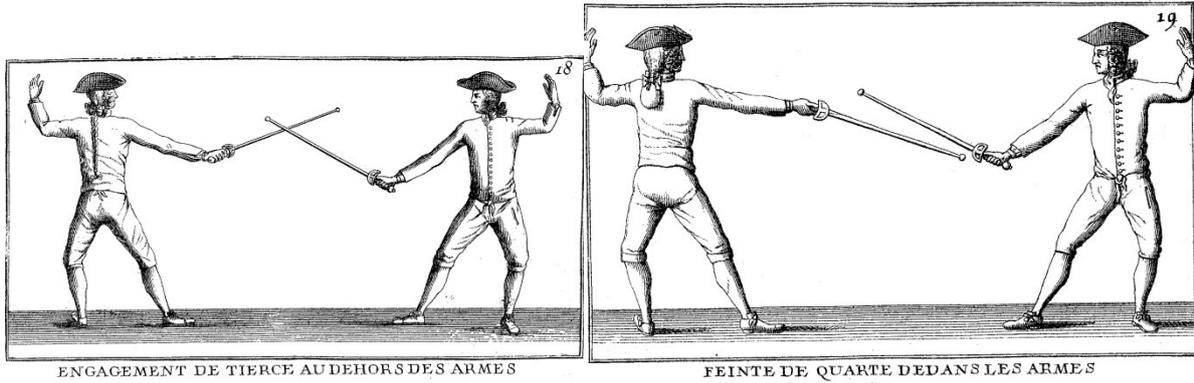
15. This attack can also parry the strong and heel of the sword. Cutover in quarte parried with circle, the left arm opposing



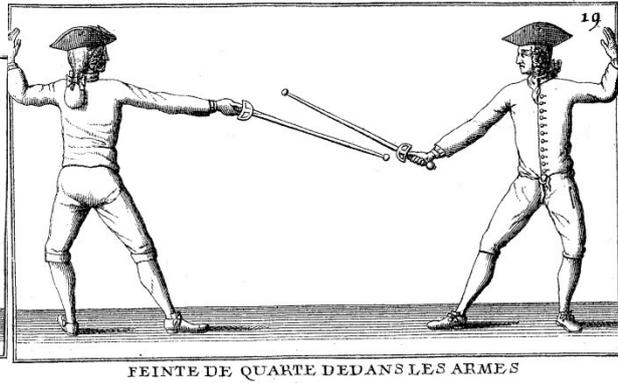
16. The attack of quarte-cutover is ordinarily parried with Circle even while opposing the left arm. Attack of cutover in quarte parried with the heel and strong of the sword.



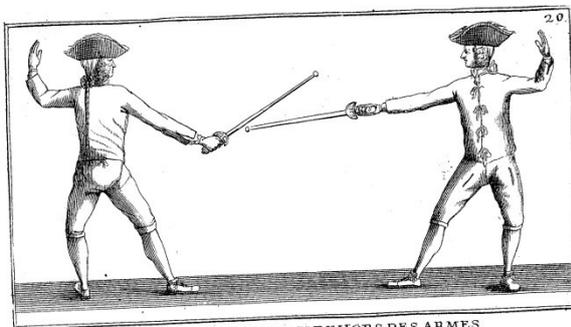
17. Engagement of quarte inside the arm



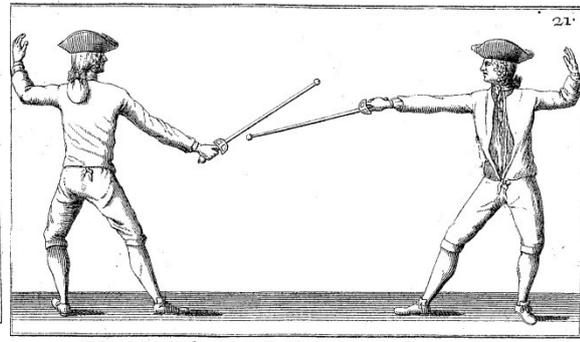
18. Engagement of tierce outside the arm



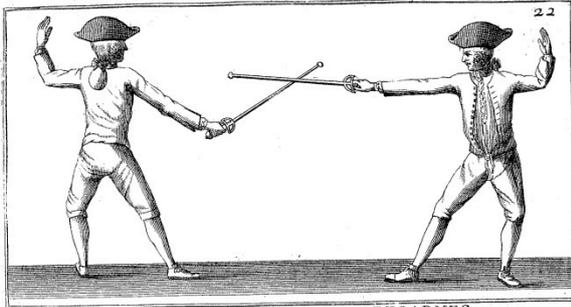
19. Feint of quarte inside the arm



20. Feint of tierce outside the arm

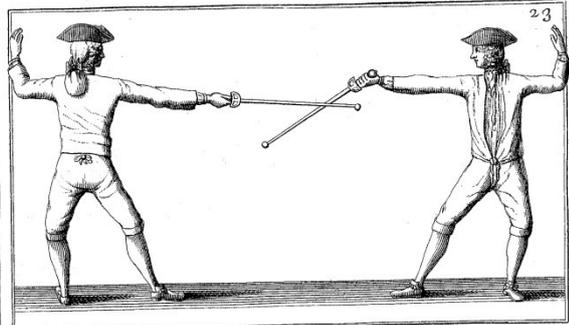


21. Feint of seconde under the arm



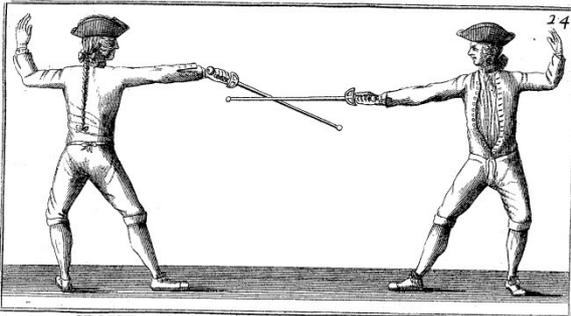
FEINTE A LA TÊTE AUDESSUS DES ARMES

22. Feint to the head over the arm



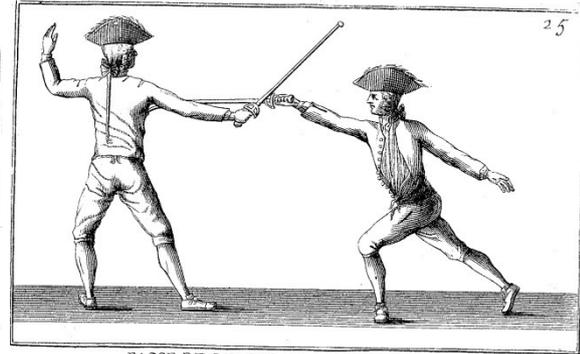
CROISEMENT DEPEE DEDANS LES ARMES

23. Crossing the sword inside the arm



CROISEMENT DE TIERCE AUDEIORS DES ARMES

24. Crossing in tierce outside the arm



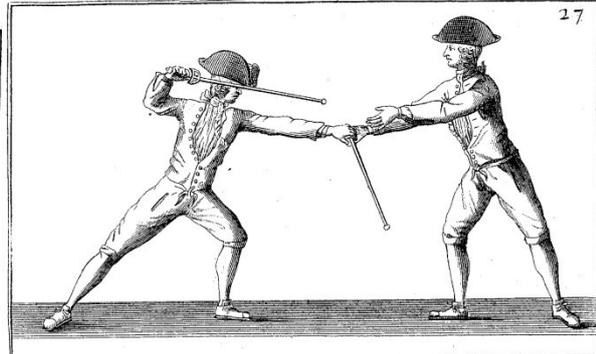
PASSE DE QUARTE AUDEANS DES ARMES

25. Parry of quarte inside the arm



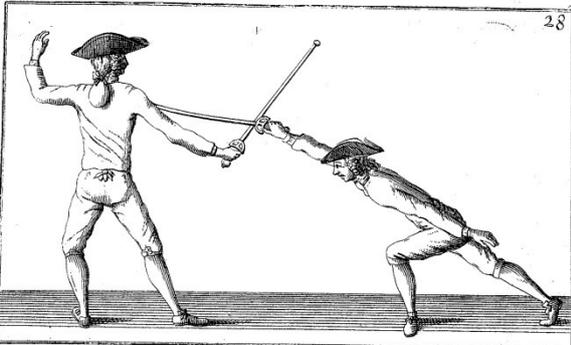
SAISEMENT DEPEE APRES LA PASSE DE QUARTE

26. Seizing the sword after a parry of quarte



DESARMEMENT APRES AVOIR PASSE LES PASSES EN ROMPANT LA MESURE

27. Disarm after having passed back to break measure



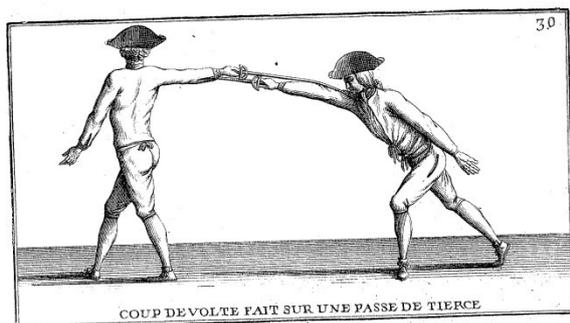
PASSE DE TIERCE DONNEE

28. Pass of tierce, given

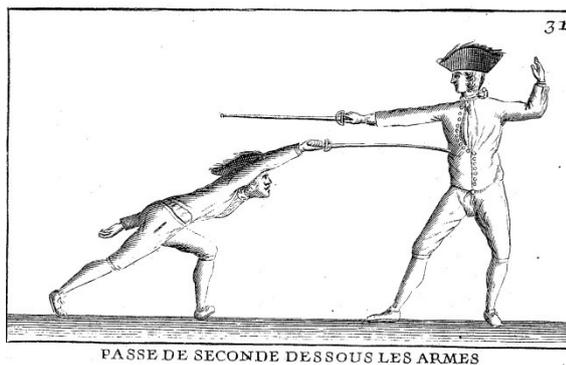


SAISEMENT DEPEE APRES AVOIR PASSE DE TIERCE

29. Seizing the sword after having passed in tierce



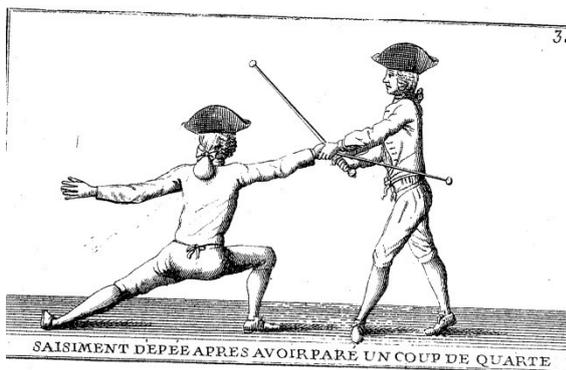
30. Attack on the volte made upon a pass in tierce



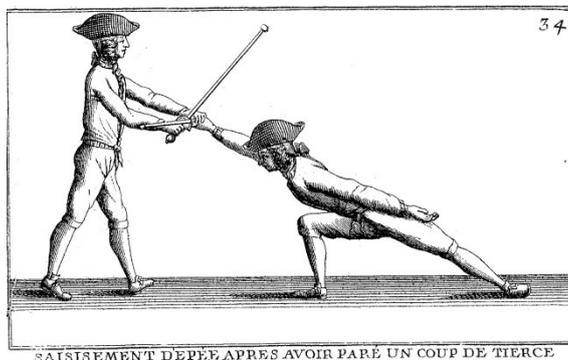
31. Pass in seconde under the arm



32. Seizing the sword after having parried in seconde



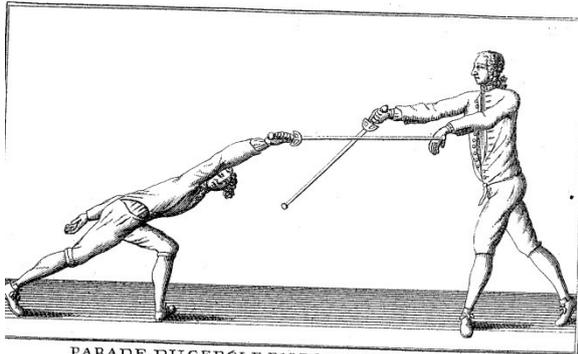
33. Seizing the sword after parrying an attack in quarte



34. Seizing the sword after having parried an attack in tierce

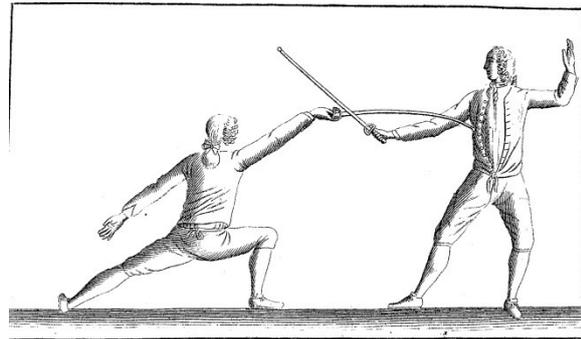


35. Changing the sword between hands against those who, while passing, seizes the hand instead of the guard



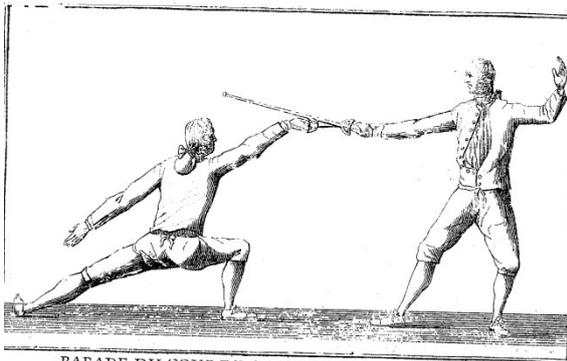
PARADE DU CERCLE EN ROMPANT LA MESURE

36. Parry of circle while breaking measure



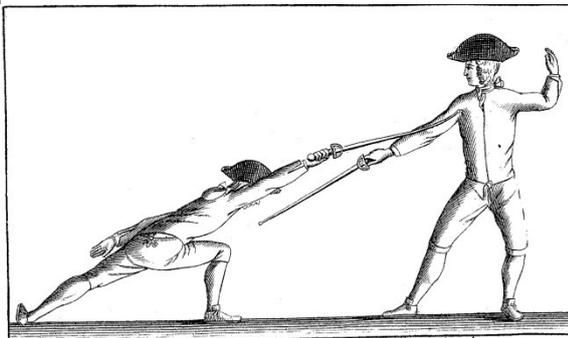
COUP DE QUARTE DESSUS LES ARMES DONNÉ

37. Attack of quarte over the arm, given



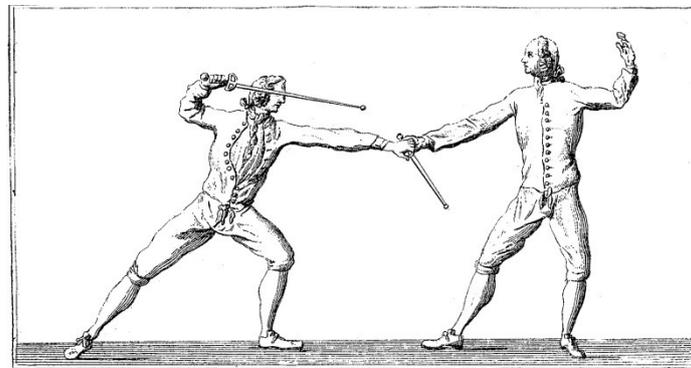
PARADE DU COUP DE QUARTE DESSUS LES ARMES

38. Parry for an attack of quarte over the arm



COUP DE TIERCE DONNÉ CEUX QUI BAISSENT LA POINTE DE L'ÉPÉE EN PARANT

39. Attack of tierce given to those who lower the point while parrying



Paris Chez M. Bonnart rue DESARMEMENT OU PASSE FINIE St. Jacques à l'aigle.

40. Disarm or final pass (St. Jacques à l'aigle)

## **2. To make the salute well**

After putting oneself well on guard one must first raise his hat with the left hand, and let it fall upon the left knee while drawing the right foot behind the left to extend the leg about the length of one foot, always holding the body upright. Then return the left foot behind the right while returning his hat and returning to guard.

## **3.**

After putting himself on guard and having saluted he must pass with a large step forward to gain measure upon the enemy, this is done by passing the left leg in front of the right while extending it well and keeping it up while presenting the sword, by raising the right wrist a little and covering the left arm a little. Next return the right foot in front of the left and return to a natural guard, one must take up the guard well during all actions by keeping the body upright and to the rear, always well effaced and with great freedom.

## **4. Manner of approaching the enemy**

After putting oneself on guard well one must gain measure stepping with a small pace forward. This is done by advancing the right foot and following up by drawing up with the left, always having the body well to the rear and the sword well in front without changing the distance both feet must be at, and without disordering them from the same line.

## **5. To break measure**

One must step with a small step to the rear, this is done after coming on guard and in measure by retiring the left foot to the rear and following up by drawing up the right, and taking guard such that both feet are not too from the distance they must be at, and that both heels always stay on the same line, the right heel aligned with the instep of the left shoe.

## **6. To push well a thrust in quarte inside the arm**

After coming on guard and into measure one must first make the right hand depart first while supporting well the wrist and lowering the tip of the sword toward the stomach of the enemy, such that the nails are turned on high, the arm extended and well supported. Next one must bend the right knee while lunging in a way that falls in line with the toe of the right foot, extending well the left shank and grounding well the left foot on the ground while holding it very steady. Extend the left arm while turning the hollow of the hand to the outside, and supporting it about the height of the shoulder; one must push such that the body stays over both haunches and the head is very upright; after having pushed well one must return to guard and return well the sword in front so as to be ready to parry in case the enemy ripostes.

## **7. To push well a thrust of tierce outside the arms**

One must, after coming well on guard, be in measure such that the right hand departs first by turning the nails down low extend well the arm, then bend the right knee while lunging and extend well the left shank, ground the left foot, lower the head and body, and carry the head along the right arm, it must be that the left arm is well extended and carried along the left thigh while turning to the inside and carrying the hollow of the hand on the left thigh, then, after having pushed, one must return to guard while turning the edge of the sword which is inside the arm, to the outside as it is called, returning the sword in tierce, in case the enemy ripostes so as to be able to parry.

## **8. To push well a thrust in seconde, under the arm**

After putting oneself on guard and in measure; it must be that the right hand departs first while turning to seconde; that is to say that the nails must be turned inside a little to tierce, the wrist well supported, the arm well extended, while lowering the point of the sword to the height of the stomach of the enemy, next bend the right knee while lunging and extend well the left shank, ground the foot well, and the left arm is almost placed on the thigh, and a little more turned inside than tierce, and the body well lowered, the kidneys a little raised and that the head is entirely covered by the right arm which is well supported, next return to guard by re-finding the sword in tierce, so as to be able to parry in case the enemy ripostes.

### **9. To push well a cutover thrust in quarte**

After having come on guard and in measure, if the enemy has his wrist a little high the right hand must depart first while turning to quarte while supporting a little the wrist, extend well the arm, next, in order to lunge, bend the right knee and extend the left shank, ground well the left foot, the head and body must be a little low such that the head is along the arm, one must throw the left arm backwards while extending it well, and turning it to quarte, after having pushed in low quarte one must return to guard while turning the hand to tierce; then if the enemy ripostes, one can parry it.

### **10. To parry well an attack in quarte inside the arm**

After coming on guard and into measure if the enemy pushes in quarte one must parry with the edge and strong of the sword, because one must note that it must be the edge which is inside the arm which makes all parries and engagements of the sword; it must also be that they are done with the strong of the sword, without deviating the point from in front of the enemy, and the riposte must not be too prompt, because when the parry is well made it is a surer attack than the riposte, one must thus parry with the strong of the sword which is done by lowering the wrist a little and turning it a little to the inside, and holding the body over the left side.

### **11. To riposte an attack of flanconade, after a parry of quarte**

After coming on guard and in measure if the enemy pushes in quarte one must parry with the strong of the sword while lowering the wrist and, after having gained the weak of the enemy's sword while parrying, one must push along the sword while opposing with the left hand along the body. This thrust is called the flanconade, because it is given to the flank. One must take the guard well by opposing the left arm so as to present the left shoulder, on the contrary one must be well effaced and hold the body well straight while pushing this thrust

### **12. To parry well an attack in tierce**

After having come on guard and in measure, if the enemy pushes in tierce one must parry with the strong and the same edge of the sword with which one parries quarte, it is why one must turn the hand to the outside of the arm without deviating the point from in front of the enemy- then when he retires one pushes a riposte in tierce; and in seconde if he raises his arm

### **13. To parry an attack in seconde**

After having come on guard and in measure if the enemy pushes seconde one must parry with the same edge with which one made the other parries, by letting the point of the sword fall low, supporting well the wrist and extending well the right arm.

### **17. To engage well the sword in quarte, outside the arm**

After coming on guard and in measure it is the same edge of the sword which serves for all parries which serves also for making engagements of the sword, it is why, to engage the sword in quarte, it is only a small movement of the wrist while turning the edge inside the arm and deviating the sword of the enemy with the strong of one's own, because he also wishes to engage by finding himself engaged in the same way. This engagement can also be done while stepping, supposing the enemy finds himself out of measure. It is why one must take a guard well while always having engagement, body well to the rear and well-effaced and such that the point always stays in front of the enemy.

### **19. Feint in quarte inside the arm**

After coming on guard and in measure and that the enemy has parried some attacks in quarte one must, to trump them, make a feint of quarte to return a push in tierce in the time that he goes to parry quarte. For this effect one must be in tierce and make a small disengagement under the sword without touching it and raise well the wrist and turn to quarte letting well the point of the sword in front of the enemy as a feint which mimics an attack; one must well extend the arm while making a feint so as to not give an opening to the enemy to thrust into. This feint is also made when stepping supposing that the enemy is out of measure and when doing so one must have the body well to the rear.

## **20. Feint in tierce outside the arm**

After coming on guard and in measure, and having pushed some attacks in tierce, one must have the sword in quarte; to do this make a small engagement underneath the sword without touching it while supporting well the wrist and by turning the hand to quarte, extending well the point in front of the enemy, and, in the time that he goes to parry, one must disengage and push in quarte, next return to guard while re-finding the sword in quarte. This feint can be done also while stepping supposing the enemy is out of measure, always having the body well to the rear.

## **21. Feint in seconde under the arm**

After coming on guard and in measure one must make this feint with the hand turned to tierce and with a small movement of the wrist make a disengagement under the arm and in the time that the enemy lowers the wrist one must disengage and push tierce, under the arm. This feint can also be made while stepping supposing the enemy is out of measure, always having the body well-effaced while striking him.

## **22. Feint to the head above the arm**

After coming on guard and in measure one must, to do this feint, turn the hand to tierce and strike the sword of the enemy and make him raise his arm, and in the time that he raises his arm one must disengage and push in seconde. This feint is also made while stepping and is even better than when given while stood still. One must, when striking, hold the body well and make it very quickly.

## **23. Crossing the sword in quarte to the inside of the arm**

After coming on guard and in measure if the enemy has his point out straight one must set it aside with a croisé, this is done by letting the point of the sword fall, supporting well the wrist and turning it to quarte gathering up the enemy's sword, and when it is well over to one side one can thrust in quarte. One must when making the croisé have the body well back, it can also be done while stepping at them provided they are out of measure.

## **24. Crossing the sword over the arm**

One can cross the sword in tierce over the arm by lowering the point of the sword and turning the wrist to tierce, supporting well the wrist, this is done by giving a whipping attack on the enemy's sword. If, in the time that one crosses, the enemy lowers his hand one must disengage and push in tierce; if he raises the arm one must push in seconde under the arm. This is why one must have the body well to the rear so as to be able to distinguish between the actions he takes.

The croisé is also done while stepping provided that one is out of measure.

## **25. To better make a pass in quarte, outside the arm**

After coming on guard and in measure one must first depart with the hand first while holding it well, supporting well the wrist and turning to quarte, next pass the left foot in front of the right about the length of one foot, extending well the right shank, and throwing well the left arm to the rear, while turning to quarte and supporting it.

One must take a guard well while passing the body towards the right fully on both haunches, and such that the head is straight.

## **26. Seizing the sword after a pass in quarte**

After having passed to seize the sword one must advance the right foot and, at the same time, advance the left hand and seize the enemy sword. Pass finished.

## **27.**

Then, after having seized the sword, one must return the right foot behind the left and at the same time return also the right arm while presenting the point at the enemy. One must bend the left knee and well extend the left arm, so, in case the enemy wants to defend himself, one can resist him.

### **28. To pass well in tierce over the arm**

After coming on guard and in measure it must first be that the hand departs first while turning to tierce, extending the arm well. Next pass the left foot in front of the right lowering the body well, carrying the head along the arm, throwing the left arm behind while turning it to tierce and placing it along the left though, always carrying the feet on the same line.

### **29. Seizing the sword**

After having passed one must advance the right foot at the same time as the left hand and seize the sword of the enemy, next retire the right foot behind the left and bend the left knee forward, retire the right arm while presenting the sword at the enemy, extend well the left arm.

### **30. Volte attack upon a pass of tierce**

In the time that he passes one must disengage to quarte while supporting well the hand and at the same time throw the left foot fully behind the right and turning at the same time the body and presenting the kidneys at the enemy throwing the left arm well to the rear. One must while voting have the body well upright.

### **31. To pass in seconde**

After coming on guard and in measure it must be that the right hand departs first while supporting it well and turning it to seconde, next pass the left foot in front of the right, lowering well the body while raising the kidneys, throwing the left arm to the rear while turning it to seconde.

### **32. Seizing the sword**

Next, after having passed, advance the right foot at the same time as the left hand and seize the sword of the enemy. After having seized the sword, one must retire the right foot to the rear, next the right arm while supporting it and while presenting the point of the sword at the enemy. One must also have the left arm always well extended then if the enemy wants to defend himself one can resist him.

### **33. Seizing the sword**

After coming on guard and in measure if the enemy pushes in quarte one must parry while advancing the left foot in front of the right. Next seize the sword of the enemy with the left hand, and after retire the right arm to the rear while supporting it and present the point at him always holding well the guard of his sword, it must be that the seizure of the sword is done with the body well to the rear.

### **34. Seizing the sword after a parry of tierce**

This seizure can be done in the same way after a parry of tierce as after that of quarte.

### **35. Method for changing the sword between hands**

After coming on guard and in measure if the enemy, after having passed, instead of seizing the guard of the sword seizes the arm one must take the sword with the left hand in the middle of the blade, while at the same time striking the enemy. It must be that the attack is done strongly and quickly and the body well to the rear.

\*17th or 18th century?

Although undated, Le Perche's book has long been considered to have been first printed in 1676. The great collector and fencing historian Arsene Vigeant seems to have been the first to suggest this date, in his bibliography of 1882, on the evidence of old catalogues. Daressy (Archives des Maitres d'Armes, 1888) identifies a Le Perche du Coudray as a fencing master working in the 1670s. The respected French fencing historian Pierre Lacaze agreed with this assessment.

However, in 2005 a manuscript in an 18th century calf binding surfaced in France. It had a more detailed text written in several hands on paper with a 1743 watermark and 44 ink drawings similar to the engravings, but showing fencers without hats. The bookdealer who offered it for sale claimed that the manuscript was the original text from which an abridged version was printed by N Bonnart around 1750. Just to confuse matters, a second mid-18th century edition, also undated, is known, but with a different printer – the widow Chereau.

Anyway, the dealer pointed out, no Bonnart can be found working as a printer in the 17th century, whereas one by that name was known in the 18th century. Also, there was another member of the Le Perche family teaching fencing in the mid-18th century and could be the author. Most importantly, the style of clothing shown in the illustrations is 18th century, an argument supported by an independent costume specialist I consulted, who says the wigs shown are definitely mid-18th century. All this proves, says the dealer, that both versions were printed pretty much at the same time, around 1750. And he has the original manuscript,

for which he was asking in 2005 (and still is, as far as I know) a sum of such magnitude that it would buy an original Thibault.

So why was 1676 ever accepted as the date of first publication? Well, there was the first Le Perche and, contrary to the dealer's claim, there was also a N Bonnart working as an engraver, so possibly a printer as well, at the time – he produced a fine portrait of a 17th century fencing master that is in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. Finally, the style of the fencing in the illustrations seems to me to be closer to De La Touche, 1670, in the length of the lunges with the left hand turned palm down, than anything shown in 18th century manuals. And, although crudely drawn, the foils appear to have crown-shaped guards, which had been discarded by the mid-18th century.

But then again, my copy printed by Bonnart has one plate showing a watermark with the digits 174... (last number obscured), which suggests that it was printed in the mid-18th century – of course, this could have been inserted from a later printing by the widow Chereau, since none of the other leaves has any watermark, so...

Either the book was first printed in the second half of the 17th century, in which case the manuscript is a later embellishment and the fencers are wearing wigs and costumes before their time, or the book was printed in the 18th century with illustrations showing 17th century style foil. One would have to accept the latter as more likely.

Malcolm Fare, 2009