

**Tract and theory of Canne Royale: fencing (First edition)**  
**by Eugene Humé and J. Renkin**  
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**Introduction**

The desire to be useful to masters and amateurs is the sole motive which guides us in publishing this work.

We do not know if there exists another work of this nature, and, although ours is well abridged, we believe we have left nothing out.

For the ease of the reader we have given in one of our chapters the method for delivering blows, then the explanation of terms used in the art of the cane. In this way we can teach our lessons without being obliged to stop to give a description of each movement.

If, for example, we speak of a head-blow it will only require an understanding of the chapter in which it is described. Our lessons are thus made with the least interruption and, as a consequence, delivered to everyone.

We believe it is necessary to inform our readers that before publishing this work we were retained in the principal fencing salles of Paris and Brussels, where we had the honour of fencing with the best masters and that we have studied their diverse methods which we have risked, in our quality as brief members of several fencing societies, to put it all in this tract today, well incomplete, without doubt, but of which, see our intention, we reclaim the greatest indulgence

**First chapter- usefulness of the cane**

It is practiced with one hand; its use is not subject to fixed rules because all blows delivered are valid. This art is truly a game, its sole aim is to avoid the adversary's blows and give him as many as possible, without regard to a certain part of the body.

Unfortunately for this it is of course that blows must be applied according to principles; thus it is to commit a great error to suppose that the use of the cane is a vague art; but, in comparison with point and contre-pointe &c., it is easy to see that the rules which follow are less strict. This will not stop youths, however, who are drawn to this to this type of exercise from having, at the start, certain difficulties to overcome; also we advise them to have great patience, and soon they will experience the goodness of this art, which gives the body a graceful suppleness and corrects all faults inherent in a constitution, so to speak, from infancy.

Thus we have seen young, withered and stunted men become completely reformed by this powerful exercise. We have seen those of a timid character and always cowardly gain a bold reserve, a brave wisdom.

We seek, by the latter example, to prove the numerous advantages of the cane.

Supposing attack by several wrongdoers, armed with batons and knives. Your riding crop will suffice for putting them to flight, avoiding blows which they seek to land and, in turn, apply your own which will have them at your mercy.

This must not be the stimulus for you to engage in practicing a good art. The cane is, in some ways, the weapon of the bourgeoisie, as the blade is that of the soldier

## **Chapter II- advice to masters**

We engage those who are free to teach the cane, to put, in their method, as briefly as possible, without being obscure. We advise them, especially, to first understand the character of the pupil, his strength and physical qualities. Thus, he must employ more gentleness with one pupil than another; manage those who have a tardy disposition; pass over certain small faults, all while maintaining the severity necessary for them to not obtain bad habits; have some patience for, if at fault, them to repeat the same thing a thousand times; in a word, extend their strength gradually. Because one pupil will have a more precocious disposition than another; certain fast-burners have a very strong ardour and, in this cases, he will master it because often the more active one will become more dangerous than the slow learner.

It is thus that the master makes the pupil understand that, without moderation, it is impossible to acquire judgement and presence of mind, two things essential in the art of fencing and especially in the art of cane; the proof is that it is not astonishing to see a beginner, of calm character, acquire greater strength. For the master it is thus the most favourable moment to direct the pupil to the true practice.

We finish the chapter with one last piece of advice; it is good to protect pupils from assaulting before they have perfect understanding of all the lessons, as much of the theory as the practice; because it is essential for us to say that, with our own eyes, we have seen professors immediately put their pupils in the fight before they have been given the least notion of the principles. We avow that there must be a little self-respect of his art in order to act somewhat slowly.

## **Chapter III- advice to pupils**

There is much advice to give those who wish to learn the art of the cane. We shall enumerate the qualities which are necessary for a player; the pupil must thus work to acquire these.

He must demonstrate as much moderation as possible, with an assured and modest countenance, listen without infatuation to good advice, reject all fatuousness, keep a cool head, set aside all fear, keep a firm confidence; because, intimidated and losing certainty in front of an adversary is to run out in front of danger and put an obstacle in the way of his plans. He must not lack action, because, without action, it is not possible to acquire this flexibility of body and the subtlety necessary for a player. Surely so.

Thus we engage the pupil greatly in forming judgement to better determine the intent of the adversary and to wait on a steady footing; to not recoil in front of blows, seeking to make a parry and riposte at the same moment; coming into speed, this promptness, this quickness and this activity, qualities which are common in a good player.

Always taking a parry is a rigorous rule; because seeking to seize the adversary at the moment where he is occupied with preparing his own attack is to be already hit; there is no benefit from the time hit, arrive first in a parry and then, without the least interruption, immediately take a riposte.

We repeat the cane is a game; once the combat commences it must always be in motion, retake the guard nimbly and also wait for the adversary to take his, when he has hit.

It comes about sometimes that the master does not wait for his pupil to retake the guard. He parries the blow and immediately delivers another. We engage those who begin to practice the cane to not be put off by this method; it is good because it gives great vivacity, only the professor cannot put it into practice over five or six lessons; continue for a while, it will not be harmful to the pupil.

A last word to finish the chapter; it is important to take that that the cane is always held between the thumb and index; the other fingers remain half-closed. One must take care that the hold is light and to remain in the game as much as possible; we even say that this is the secret of the art. The pupil, now, follows our advice.

#### **Chapter IV- equipment**

Make a choice of a cane of stiff wood, a mask reinforced, inside and outside, with a large and well-stuffed pad of horsehair, covering half the head and all of the ears, half of the temple and a part of both cheeks; the middle of the face is saved by an iron grill which must be very narrow; or it must be that the mask is also fully covered, on the outside, by a leather band, that can be fixed with ease on the head.

The hand with which you hold the cane must be covered by a padded glove and fitted with a gauntlet intended to protect the forearm.

Large slippers couldn't hurt

A good leather gilet, well-padded over the chest and covering all of the arms, is an indispensable item.

Trousers are up to the taste of the player. However, we are of the view that masters, and thus pupils, assault in simple cotton trousers, a mask, glove and a fine shirt. This matter is not astonishing, because, after some length of effort, one becomes accustomed to the blows and will even prefer to be lightly clad.

#### **Chapter V- explanation of terms**

The attack- Is a blow delivered with success. The blow can be simple or compound: it is simple when done with a single action, compound when necessary to make one or more feints to deliver it.

Feints- it is feinting to deliver a certain blow and then deliver another. On counts two sorts of feint: the first is that by which one seeks to make the adversary parry on the opposite side to that which one wishes to deliver the attack. The second is practiced in the same manner and it must be done fairly quickly, such that the adversary does not have time to avoid the blow one has feinted from hitting him.

To attack- is to seek to hit the adversary

Appel- is to strike one or more times the ground with the right foot, staying in the same place.

Defence- is to avoid the adversary; in cane it is impossible to give a designation to the parries; practice alone must guide you, giving you the means to evade this or that blow. This is all we can say, that it is good to parry in a way to protect the flanks and head; thus, if one seeks to give a head-blow do not raise the hand too much.

Riposte- is to attack the adversary immediately after a taking a parry

*Tac* of the cane- is to riposte immediately after a parry

*Tac-au-tac-* is to riposte after having parried an adversary's riposte

*Blow-for-blow-* is to reach out at the adversary at the same time as he delivers a successful attack at you

*Missed blow-* is to poorly direct the blow when seeking to deliver a attack

*Four facings-* in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> lessons we repeat the exercises on each facing. We mean by this the four walls of the salle: 1<sup>st</sup> the wall to the right; 2<sup>nd</sup> that which is behind you; 3<sup>rd</sup> that which is found to your left; 4<sup>th</sup> the point of departure, which you will find in front of you. When doing the facings always lead to the right.

*Facings-* in the first lesson 3 facings are instructed. To do these you must first be placed on guard and turn on the right heel, while advancing the left foot, in such a way as to face to the right and during these movements you moulinet to the right. Once the facing is taken cease the face-blow and place the cane on the right shoulder. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> facings turn yourself anew to the right, as in the first case.

*The wall-the wall* is a preparatory exercise before the assault; it includes a salute.

*The assault-* is a real combat between two adversaries.

### **Chapter VI-first position**

The body, a little turned to the left, must be balanced on the thighs; the head high, the heel of the right foot against the ankle of the left foot, feet at right angles, the right hand holding the cane which rests on the ground, left arm hanging along the left thigh, left hand open, palm to the outside and the little finger along the seam of the trousers (fig.1).

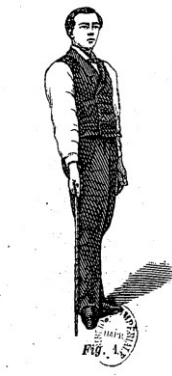


fig.1

### **Second position**

From the first position to the guard one proceeds in the following manner: give a head-blow in front of you and you immediately withdraw the cane to the left shoulder, the right arm bent over the chest. While making this movement one must place the left hand at the small of the back, profile well the arm, carry the right foot forward from the ankle of the left foot by a distance equal to the length which exists between ankle and the tip of the knee; shanks must be held straight (fig.2).



fig.2

If, instead of having the right foot forward, you have your left foot you give to this position the name *left guard*.

The guard can be changed in three ways: 1<sup>st</sup> by jumping on the spot; by retreating; by advancing.

It is notable that during lessons the left hand is not placed in the small of the back but better at the base of the neck; by this means the pupil avoids certain blows which he can strongly give himself (fig.3).



fig.3

### **Chapter VII- designation of attacks**

Face-blow- face-blows are those given most often with the cane. One must, to apply them, make the cane describe one or more circles around the head, and aim well at the adversary's face.

It is useless to say that face-blows must always be given to the side to which one is turning.

Head-blow- head-blows are applied by describing one or more circles with the cane either to the side or both sides of the body.

Cutovers-Flank-blow- Cutovers are given by beating both flanks with the cane.

Cutovers are nothing more than flank-blows with the difference that instead of beating the flank, one aims, in the assault, for those of the adversary all while raising the right elbow a little to, as required, aim immediately for a parry against a head-blow.

Stophit- is to plunge the tip of the cane toward the adversary's chest which hits its mark, all while holding the arm extended. By this means he cannot approach you; this blow is defensive, it is ungracious to give one of these as a feint.

Groin-blow-make a moulinet with cane to the rear and withdraw a little, all while plunging with force at the groin of the adversary. This blow is banned just like the previous one.

Shank-blow- this blow is given while striking either with a bent or straight arm, on the shanks of the adversary

Ankle-blow- ankle-blows are given the same as shank-blows, with the only difference that instead of seeking to reach the shanks one aims the blow at the ankles.

Butt-blow- is a strong, cruel blow; to apply it one must withdraw the cane to the rear, along the right arm and strike the adversary's face with the butt which is held in the hand.

This blow is given when one is grabbed. By grace of the mask one is not injured; it can promptly overcome the wrongdoer who cannot ordinarily attack when bound to his prey (fig.4).



fig.4

Blows to the arms, stomach and chest are given equally. We believe it is useless to expound further on the blows to give; suffice to say that one can strike the adversary anywhere where one finds a vulnerable spot.

### **The Assault- how to conduct them**

#### **Chapter VIII**

Before commencing the assault one plays gracefully at the wall, which one ordinarily follows with a *crowning* salute; followed by each putting on his mask. It is for the older player to begin the attack. If, by chance, the cane of your adversary falls it is your obligation to gather it up and present it to him politely.

It is bad form to pretend to have touched his adversary, especially when he himself has denied the blow. It equally proves a lack of education to deny a blow received or to be vexed after having been touched. If, after a certain number of attacks, you play to three and at the third your adversary touches it is civil to invite them to play to one last attack, which is called *la belle*, and which is ordinarily declared the winner.

We believe it is useless to expound further on the method of comporting oneself in the assault.

The pupil must be polite, not only to his adversary and also with the public.

For all the physical qualities required we send our readers to the chapter: *Advice for pupils*

### **Chapter IX- first lesson**

On guard. Three facings. Four cutovers; at the fourth cutover one must have the cane at the right flank. One face blow to the left, one to the right; while giving the face-blow to the left hold the right shank straight and bend on the left knee; while giving the face-blow to the right, you bend on the right knee and straighten the left shank. Again two facings. Four cutovers. One face-blow to the left. One face-blow to the right. After these two facings, you have the left foot forward; return to guard, with a head-blow to the left, a head blow to the right; it on the head-blow to the right that the guard is retaken, by carrying the right foot forward; next you change guard with a jump on the spot, while giving face-blows to the right. Having changed guard you have the left foot forward anew, retake the guard with a head-blow left and right.

### **Chapter X- second lesson**

On guard. Jump to the right, first facing; after this jump you have the left foot forward; change guard with a second jump, always staying on the same facing. Then, you make the second facing, you change the guard twice with two jumps; you make a last jump to the right to arrive at the fourth facing, that of the point of departure. At the latter, instead of changing the guard twice, and having the left foot forward, you return to guard simply with a head-blow to the left, one to the right; you change guard with a jump and you retake it with a head-blow to the left, one to the right.

It is useless to recall that, during these two jumps, to each facing one must always give face-blows, while changing direction with each jump.

### **Chapter-XI- third lesson**

On guard. You make three steps in front of you, while jumping slightly and advancing, for the first step, the right foot; for the second, the left foot, and for the third, the right foot.

All while making these three little jumps you give face-blows while changing the direction of each step.

Once the three steps are done you return fully, turn to the rear by jumping to the left, with a crossing of the legs. You make three steps anew; after three steps you renew the jump with a crossing of the legs; change guard while jumping and return to guard with a head-blow to the left and one to the right.

### **Chapter XII- fourth lesson**

On guard. Advance the upper body forward and double the distance of the guard. Next launch yourself as far as possible, all while giving face-blows, and fall back on the right foot, the left foot forward, while facing to the right. You give four cutovers, one face-blow to the left, one face-blow to the right. Retake the guard with a head-blow to the left, one head-blow to the right; next change guard with a jump and retake it with a head-blow to the left, one to the right.

### **Chapter XIII- volte**

On guard. Carry the right foot backwards while turning to the right on the toe of the left foot. Turn a second time, by carrying the left foot backward and while turning on the toe of the right foot; next you carry the right foot backward, in such a way to be on guard with the left foot forward, while making moulinets to the right.

Next we come to the demi-volte to the front left- carry the right foot forward by turning slightly on the toe of the left foot; turn on the toe of the right foot while carrying the left foot backward, in such a way as to face to the rear and the right foot forward, moulinets to the left.

After this we come to the demi-volte to the rear and right, in such a way to return facing to the head, while turning on the toe of the right foot and carrying the left foot forward. Turn on the toe of the left foot while carrying the right foot to the rear, while facing to the rear; next you return on guard with two head-blows; change guard while jumping and retake it with a head-blow to the left and one to the right.

#### **Chapter XIV- fifth lesson**

On guard. Same jump as the fourth lesson; once the jump is done give four cutovers, one face-blow to the left, one face-blow to the right. Renew this exercise on each facing and even on the fourth. Finish the lesson with a complete volte, a demi-volte to the left and a demi-volte to the right.

Changing facing in this lesson is done while jumping to the right with face-blows and the feet parallel.

#### **Chapter XV- sixth lesson**

On guard. All while giving face-blows you turn to the right on the left heel and place the right foot to the rear, the middle of the right foot toward the left heel; return to guard with a head-blow to the left, one to the right; at the second head-blow to the right let the right arm rise up, hand in front of the left shoulder, tip of the cane angled to the right; in this position make two appels with the foot, and immediately after the second give an ankle blow. Renew this exercise on each facing while taking care to turn to the right on the left heel each time that you change facing.

Once the exercise of the fourth facing finishes, we advise, since this lesson can be taken against the wall, to follow it with a crowning salute

The crowning salute is made by describing a full circle with the cane above the head, from right to left and left to right. It is obvious that one must incline the head to salute spectators. It is required that the public respond to this salute.

#### **Chapter XVI- seventh lesson**

On guard. Make the volte on four facings, feet on the same line. On each facing deliver three head-blows to the right and three groin-blows. Take note that the head-blows and these groin-blows are given to the side that you are going to face after that where you find yourself. Immediately afterwards deliver a shank-blow but, this time, in front of you. On the fourth facing return to guard with a head-blow to the left, one to the right; change guard while jumping and return to guard with a head-blow to the left, one to the right.

On the fourth facing you can equally finish the lesson with a full volte, demi-volte to the left and a demi-volte to the right.

There are professors who perform a volte at the end of each lesson; their method is good because it gives great vivacity, agility and flexibility.

#### **Chapter XVII- eighth lesson**

On guard. Volte on the four facings. On each facing drop down with a butt-blow. After this make a leap backward, always in the same position, that is to say keeping the right foot forward and the left to the rear; all while making the jump



give flank-blows; next, without stopping, jump a second time to the rear; but, this time, bring back the feet on the same line and give a shank-blow.

On the fourth facing, that of the point of departure, finish with a volte.

### **Conclusion**

Our task is complete. We repeat that we had the pretension of offering our readers a complete tract on *Canne Royale*, only a little abridged with the aim to give the more-or-less fixed rules of an ancient art, and yet give a small appreciation of our work.

If one deigns to critique us we ask that you do it faithfully. But if you want to benefit from our lessons it will be the best recompense; because we will have reached the aim that we proposed in publishing this little tract.