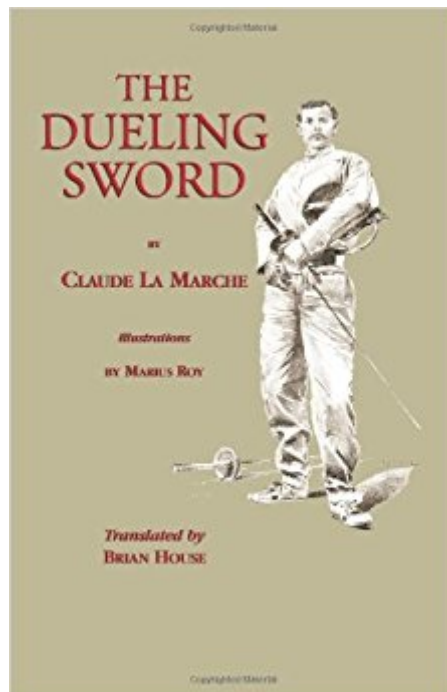


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# The Dueling Sword



## Synopsis

Originally published in 1884, Claude La Marche's *L'Art de se battre* was the first book ever written on the use of the épée, the dueling sword of the 19th century. The book in no way deals with the modern Olympic sport of fencing – rather, it covers in a passionate narrative style the rituals and techniques of combat dueling with the sword, "the war of surprises" that is the épée bout. This first English translation of La Marche's masterpiece by fencing expert Brian House, *The Dueling Sword* delivers not only a valuable treatise on historical sword fighting but extraordinary insights into the psychological stress of individual combat. La Marche writes, "the art of the épée is essentially a psychological art," and in his book he provides a comprehensive, integrated system for producing stress in the opponent and conditioning one's self to stress during a duel. Through detailed instruction in the guards, attacks, parries, ripostes, and counters, La Marche drives the reader toward the goal of practical combative fencing: the well-directed, surprising thrust to the opponent's body. *The Dueling Sword* is a pioneering work in the study of human psychology under stress and a fascinating manual on the traditional combat duel, "a meeting whose outcome is without appeal."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Brian House is a professional fencing instructor from Wheat Ridge, Colorado. His area of special interest is in the historical origins of the combative arts.

This is a translation of the second edition of what the author claims to be the first book (in French, at

least) devoted exclusively to the epee--that is, the preferred French dueling sword, not the sports weapon. The second edition appeared 14 years after the first and contains reflections on the dueling sword books that had appeared in the interim. It contains explanatory footnotes by the translator which are unfortunately not linked to their textual referent, making them less useful than they might otherwise have been. I could also wish that the translator had made more of an effort to elucidate some of the more difficult terminology. This lack made it difficult to reconstruct some of the example lessons. The book itself is illuminating reading. The author stresses that a duel "sur le terrain" (in the open field) was overwhelmingly a psychological contest. He stresses long, careful, prudent preparation and observation of the opponent, Even though he decries duels that ended with a scratch on the wrist, he advocates concentrating on the opponent's advanced targets. He wants the duelist to lure his opponent into a rash attack in an anticipated line. He advocates relatively simple actions. The chapters on "the lesson of the night before" and the actual conduct of the duel are particularly interesting. La Marche finds valuable precedents in the writings of much earlier fencing masters, and quotes them extensively to show that the "new" ideas of rival authors had been anticipated a century and a half earlier. He is strongly opinionated, even passionate in his views. He despises Italian fencing.. He resents the claims of rival authors, but gives credit where it is due. I don't think that anyone who hasn't faced an opponent with at least a thumbtack at the end of his epee, in the open air, with no mask or fencing jacket, can argue with any of their conclusions. I do think that Jules Jacob's book is clearer and more methodical, but that doesn't mean he's right. The translation is serviceable, and we owe the translator a debt of gratitude for making it.

This is a marvelous treatise for modern epeeists, written from the standpoint of a duelist who had to face a sharp sword in the hands of an enemy of unknown abilities. His recommendations are very wise and relevant to today's rapid game, especially in the way he develops the psychological game and in sequences of attacks. A must read. Thanks are due to the translator for ressurecting this gem.

This thorough book gives you a very clear and concise picture of dueling at the turn of the century and how the epee was instructed by French masters of the day. The book contains a very full curriculum, so if you're a fencing instructor looking for a good resource on classical epee, this book is an absolute must!

Great account of the full fencing training experience and an enjoyable easy read. Heart touching

that the content is an account of his career for his son to appreciate.

After reading "The Dueling Swords by Claude La Marche translated by Brian House" I knew that I was going to try fencing. The first part of the book was a little slow, being I knew little about fencing, but the further I read the more I began to understand the art of the sword duels in the 1800's. This book, translated from French to English, was very well written for the beginning fencer. With me it created an interest and excitement that I can not put to rest. This book helps to explain a gentleman defending his honor by way of a duel, the way life use to be in the 1800's. It's filled with priceless knowledge and wisdom.

A fencing master in 1884 wrote and dedicated this book to his son, with the idea that the lessons learned in the book would help him to become a good man. "The Dueling Sword" was a compelling read from cover to cover. Written in a very readable style, this book takes the reader from technical, informative equipment issues to actual lessons for the student in the 19th century duel that would easily work for today's fencing student. The final chapter is one that really lets you into the mind of the person facing his first duel!

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