

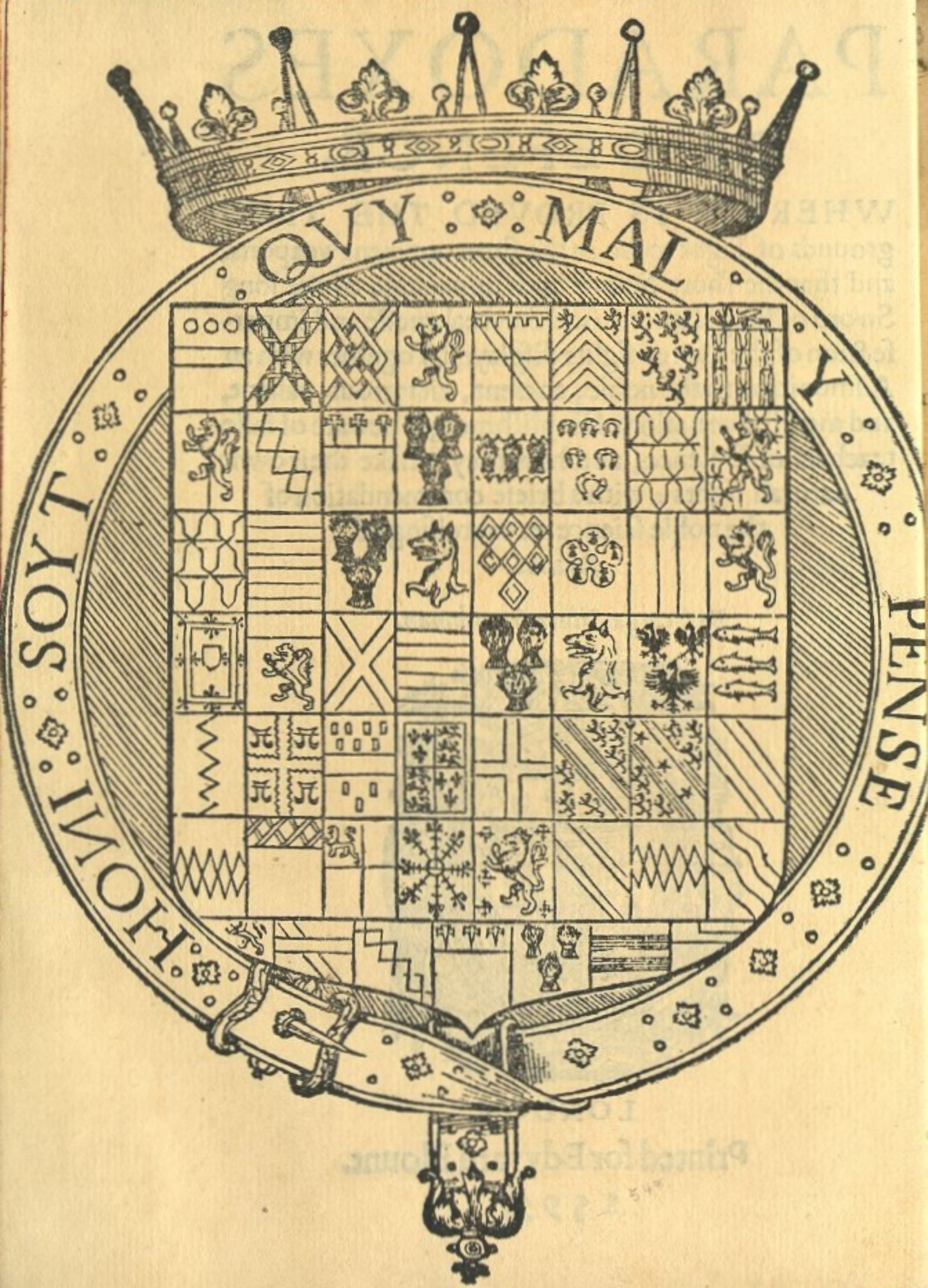
# PARADOXES OF DEFENCE,

WHEREIN IS PROVED THE TRVE  
grounds of Fight to be in the short auncient weapons,  
and that the short Sword hath aduantage of the long  
Sword or long Rapier. And the weakenesse and imper-  
fection of the Rapier-fights displayed, Together with an  
Admonition to the noble, ancient, victorious, valiant,  
and most braue nation of Englishmen, to beware of false  
teachers of Defence, and how they forsake their owne  
naturall fights : with a brieve commendation of  
the noble science or exercising of  
Armes.

*By George Siluer Gentleman.*



LONDON,  
Printed for Edvvard Blount.  
1599.





TO THE RIGHT  
HONORABLE, MY SINGVLAR  
GOOD LORD, ROBERT EARLE OF  
Essex and Ewe, Earle Marshall of England, Vis-  
count Hereford, Lord Ferrers of Chartley, Bouchier  
*and Louaine, Maister of the Queenes Maiesties horse, &*  
of the Ordenance, Chancellor of the Vniuersitie of Cam-  
*bridge, Knight of the most noble order of the Gar-*  
*ter, and one of her Higbnesse most bo-*  
*norable Priuy Counsell.*



ENCING (Right honorable)  
in this new fangled age, is like  
our fashions, euerie daye a  
change, resembling the Ca-  
melion, who altereth himselfe  
into all colours saue white: so  
Fencing changeth into all wards saue the right.  
That it is so, experience teacheth vs : why it is  
so, I doubt not but your wisdome doth con-  
ceiue. There is nothing permanent that is not  
true, what can be true that is vncertaine? how  
can that be certaine, that stands vpon vncertain

## THE EPISTLE

grounds? The mind of man a greedie hunter after truth, finding the seeming truth but chaunging, not alwayes one, but alwayes diuerse, forsakes the supposed, to find out the assured certaintie: and searching euery where saue where it should, meetes with all saue what it would. VVho seekes & finds not, seekes in vaine; who seekes in vaine, must if he wil find seeke againe: and seeke he may againe and againe, yet all in vaine. VVho seekes not what he would, as he should, and where he should, as in all other things (Right honourable) so in Fencing: the mind desirous of truth, hunts after it, and hating falshood, flies from it, and therefore hauing missed it once, it assayes the second time: if then he thriues not, he tries another way: whẽ that hath failed he aduentures on the third: & if all these faile him, yet he neuer faileth to chaunge his weapon, his fight, his ward, if by any meanes he may compasse what he most affects: for because men desire to find out a true defence for themselves in their fight, therefore they seeke it diligently, nature hauing taught vs to defend our selues, and Art teaching how: and because we misse it in one way we chaunge to another. But  
though

## DEDICATORIE.

though we often chop and change, turne and returne, from ward to ward, from fight to fight, in this vnconstant search, yet wee neuer rest in anie, and that because we neuer find the truth: and therefore we neuer find it, because we neuer seeke it in that weap<sup>n</sup> where it may be found. For, to seeke for a true defence in an vntrue weapon, is to angle on the earth for fish, and to hunt in the sea for Hares: truth is ancient though it seeme an vpstart: our forefathers were wise, though our age account them foolish, valiant though we repute them cowardes: they found out the true defence for their bodies in short weapons by their wisdome, they defended them selues and subdued their enemies, with those weapons with their valour. And (Right honorable) if we will haue this true Defence, we must seeke it where it is, in short Swords, short Staues the halfe Pike, Partisans, Gleues, or such like weapons of perfect lēgths, not in long Swords, long Rapiers, nor frog pricking Poiniards: for if there be no certain grounds for Defence, why do they teach it? if there be, why haue they not found it? Not because it is not: to say so, were to gaine say the truth: but because it is not cer-

*English maisters of defence, are profitable members in the common wealth, if they teach with ancient English weapons of true Defence, weight and conuenient length, within the compasse of the statures and strength of men to command, because it maketh them safe, bold, valiant, hardie, strong and healthfull, and victorious in the warres, seruice of their Prince, defence of their friends and countrey. But the Rapier in reason not to be taught, nor suffered to be taught, because it maketh men fearefull and vnwise in single combat, and weak, & vnseruiciable in the warres.*

## THE EPISTLE

taine in those weapons which they teach. To proue this, I haue set forth these my Paradoxes, different I confesse from the maine current of our outlandish teachers, but agreeing I am well assured to the truth, and tending as I hope to the honor of our English nation. The reason which moued me to aduenture so great a taske, is the desire I haue to bring the truth to light, which hath long time lyen hidden in the caue of contempt, while we like degenerate sonnes, haue forsaken our forefathers vertues with their weapons, and haue lusted like men sicke of a strange ague, after the strange vices and deuises of Italian, French and Spanish Fencers, litle remembering, that these Apish toyes could not free Rome from Brennius sacke, nor Fraunce from King Henrie the first his conquest. To this desire to find out truth the daughter of time, begotten of Bellona, I was also moued, that by it I might remoue the great losse of our English gallants, which we daily suffer by these imperfect fights, wherein none vndertake the combat, be his cause neuer so good, his cūning neuer so much, his strength and agilitie neuer so great, but his vertue was tied to fortune : happie man, happie doale,

## DEDICATORIE.

doale , kill or be killed is the dreadfull issue of this diuellish imperfect fight. If that man were now aliue, which beat the Maister for the scholars fault, because he had no better instructed him, these Italian Fencers could not escape his censure, who teach vs Offence, not Defence, and to fight, as Diogenes scholars were taught to daunce, to bring their liues to an end by Art. VVas Ajax a coward because he fought with a feuen fouled Buckler, or are we mad to go naked into the field to trie our fortunes, not our vertues? VVas Achilles a run-away, who ware that well tempered armour, or are we desperat, who care for nothing but to fight, and learn like the Pigmeys, to fight with bodkins, or weapons of like defence? Is it valour for a man to go naked against his enemie? why then did the Lacedemonians punish him as desperate, whom they rewarded for his vallour with a Lawrell crowne? But that which is most shamefull, they teach mē to butcher one another here at home in peace, wherewith they cannot hurt their enemies abrode in warre. For, your Honour well knowes, that when the battels are ioyned, and come to the charge, there is no roome for them

*To this it will be objected, that in the warres we vse few Rapiers or none at all, but Short Swords. To that I answer: Those are insufficient also, for that they haue no*

## THE EPISTLE

*hilt, whereby they are insufficient in their defence, and especially for the hād, which being stroken although with a verie smal blow, most commonly is the losse of a mā, because the force of his hand being taken from him, he is neither able to defend his life, nor greatly to offend his enemy: and againe, since the Rapier-fight hath bene taught, for lacke of practise they have lost the vse of the blow.*

to draw their Bird-spits, and when they haue them, what can they doe with them? can they pierce his Corset with the point? can they vnlace his Helmet, vn buckle his Armour, hew a-sunder their Pikes with a *Stocata*, a *reuerfa*, a *Dritta*, a *Stramason*, or other such like tēpestuous termes? no, these toyes are fit for children, not for men, for stragling boyes of the Campe, to murder poultrie, not for men of Honour to trie the battell with their foes. Thus I haue (right Honorable) for the trial of the truth, betweene the short Sword and the long Rapier, for the sauing of the liues of our English gallants, who are sent to certaine death by their vncertaine fights, & for abandoning of that mischieuous and imperfect weapon, which serues to kill our friēds in peace, but cannot much hurt our foes in warre, haue I at this time giuen forth these Paradoxes to the view of the world. And because I knowe such straunge opinions had need of stout defence, I humbly craue your Honorable protection, as one in whom the true nobility of our victorious Auncestors hath taken vp his residence. It will sute to the rest of your Honours most noble cōplements, to maintaine the defence of their weapons



## D E D I C A T O R Y .

weapons whose vertues you possesse. It agrees with your Honourable disposition , to receiue with fauour what is presented with loue. It sorts with your Lordships high authority , to weigh with reason, what is fit for marshall men. It is an vsuall point of your Honor , which winnes your Lordship loue in your countrey , to defend the truth in whomsoever : and it addeth a supply to that vvhich your Lordship haue of late begun to your vnspeakeable honor and our inestimable benefite, to reduce the vvearing of swordes vwith hilts ouer the hands, to the Romane discipline, no longer then they might draw them vnder their armes, or ouer their shoulders. In all or any of these respects, I rest assured that your Lordship vvill vouchsafe to receiue vvith fauor and maintaine vvith honour these Paradoxes of mine, vvhich if they be shrouded vnder so safe a shield, I vvill not doubt but to maintaine vvith reason amongst the vvise, and proue it by practise vpon the ignorant, that there is no certaine defence in the Rapier, and that there is great aduantage in the short Sword against the long Rapier, or all maner of Rapiers in generall, of vvhich length soeuer. And that the short Staffe

*Why should we  
leave the hand  
naked, since ther-  
by our limmes &  
lines are defen-  
ded, our enemies  
discomforted,  
wounded, and  
executed? I see  
no reason but  
that the hand  
should be as well  
armed and prouid-  
ed for, as anie  
other part of the  
bodie.*

THE EPIST. DEDICATORIE.

hath the vauntage against the long Staffe of twelue, foureteene, sixteene or eighteene foote long, or of what length foeuer. And against two men vvith their Swordes and Daggers, or two Rapiers, Poiniards & Gantlets, or each of them a case of Rapiers : vvhich vvwhether I can performe or not, I submit for triall to your Honors martiall censure , being at all times readie to make it good, in vvhat maner, and against vvhat man foeuer it shall stand vvith your Lordships good liking to appoint. And so I humbly commend this booke to your Lordships vvifedome to peruse, and your Honour to the Higheft to protect in all health and happineffe novve and euer.

Your Honors in all dutie,

*George Siluer.*

A N




AN ADMONITION  
TO THE NOBLE, ANCIENT,  
VICTORIOUS, VALIANT, AND  
MOST BRAVE NATION OF  
ENGLISHMEN.




*George Siluer* hauing the perfect  
knowledge of all maner of weapōs,  
and being experiēced in all maner  
of fights, thereby perceiuing the  
great abuses by the *Italian* Tea-  
chers of Offence done vnto them,  
the great errors, inconueniences, &  
false resolutions they haue brought  
them into, haue inforced me, euen of pitie of their most  
lamentable wounds and slaughters, & as I verily thinke  
it my bounden dutie, with all loue and hūmilitie to ad-  
monish them to take heed, how they submit them-  
selues into the hands of *Italian* teachers of Defence, or  
straungers whatsoeuer; and to beware how they forsake  
or suspect their owne naturall fight, that they may by  
casting off of these *Italianated*, weake, fantastick, and  
most diuellish and imperfect fights, and by exerci-  
sing of their owne ancient weapons, be restored, or  
atchieue vnto their natural, and most manly and victo-  
rious fight againe, the dint and force whereof manie

*Of running and standing fast in Rapier fight, the runner hath the vantage.*

- 6  F two valiant men do fight being both cunning in running, & that they both vse the same at one instant, their course is doubled, the place is wonne of both sides, and one or both of them will commonly be slaine or sore hurt: and if one of them shall runne, and the other stand fast vpon the *Imbrocata* or *Stocata*, or howsoeuer, the place wilbe at one instant wonne of one side, and gained of the other, and one or both of them wilbe hurt or slaine: if both shall prese hard vpon the guard, he that first thrusteth home in true place, hurteth the other: & if both thrust together, they are both hurt: yet some vantage the runner hath, because he is an vncertaine marke, and in his motion: the other is a certaine marke, and in a dead motion: and by reason thereof manie times the vnskilfull man taketh vantage he knoweth not how, against him that lyeth watching vpon his ward or *Stocata* guard.

*Of striking and thrusting both together.*

- 7  It is strongly holden of manie, that if in fight they find their enemy to haue more skill then themselues, they presently will continually strike, & thrust iust with him, whereby they will make their fight as good as his, and thereby haue as good aduantage as the other with all his skill: but if their swordes be longer then the other, then their aduantage is great; for it is certaine

certaine (say they) that an inch will kill a man: but if their swordes be much longer then the other, then their aduantage is so great, that they wilbe sure by thrusting and striking iust with the other, that they will alwaies hurt him that hath the short sword, and go cleare themselves, because they will reach him, when he shall not reach them. These men speake like such as talke of Robin Hoode, that neuer shot in his bow; for to strike or thrust iust together with a man of skill, lyeth not in the will of the ignorant, because the skilfull man alwaies fighteth vpon the true times, by the which the vnskilfull is still disappointed of both place and time, and therefore driuen of necessitie still to watch the other, when & what he will doe; that is, whether he will strike, thrust, or false: if the vnskilfull strike or thrust in the time of falsing, therein he neither striketh nor thrusteth iust with the other: he may saie, he hath stroke or thrust before him, but not iust with him, nor to anie good purpose; for in the time of falsing, if he strike or thrust, he striketh or thrusteth too short: for in that time he hath neither time nor place to strike home, and as it is said, the vnskilfull man, that will take vpon him to strike or thrust iust with the skilfull, must first behold what the man of skil will doe, and when he will doe it, and therefore of necessitie is driuen to suffer the skilfull man to be the first mouer, and entred into his Action, whether it be blow or thrust, the truth therof in reason cannot be denied. Now iudge whether it be possible for an vnskilfull man to strike or thrust iust together with a man of skill; but the skilfull man can most certainly strike and thrust iust together with the vnskilfull, because the vnskilfull fighteth vpon false times, which being too long

to answere the true times, the skilfull fighting vpon the true times, although the vnskilfull be the first mouer, & entred into his Action, whether it be blow or thrust; yet the shortnesse of the true times maketh at the pleasure of the skilfull a iust meeting together: in perfect fight two neuer strike or thrust together, because they neuer suffer place nor time to performe it.

Two vnskilfull men manie times by chance strike and thrust together, chance vnto them, because they know not what they doe, or how it commeth to passe: but the reasons or causes be these. Sometimes two false times meet & make a iust time together, & sometimes a true time and a false time meeteth and maketh a iust time together, and sometimes two true times meet and make a iust time together. And all this hapneth because the true time and place is vnknowne vnto them.

*George Siluer his resolution vpon that hidden or doubtful question, who hath the aduantage of the Offender or Defender.*



he aduantage is strongly holden of many to be in the offender, yea in somuch, that if two minding to offend in their fight, it is thought to be in him that first striketh or thrusteth. Others strongly hold opinion that the wardr absolutely hath still the aduantage, but these opinions as they are contrary the one to the other: so are they contrarie to true fight, as may well be seene by these short examples. If the aduantage be in the warder, then it is not good anie time to strike or thrust: if the aduantage be in the striker or thruster, then were it a friuolous

a friuolous thing to learne to ward, or at anie time to seeke to ward, since in warding lieth disaduantage. Now may it plainly by these examples appeare, that if there be anie perfection in fight, that both sides are deceiued in their opinions, because if the striker or thruster haue the aduantage, then is the warder still in danger of wounds or death. And againe, if the warder hath the aduantage, then is the striker or thruster in as great daunger to defend himselfe against the warder, because the warder from his wards, taketh aduantage of the striker or thruster vpon euerie blow or thrust, that shall be made against him. Then thus I conclude, that if there be perfection in the Science of Defence, they are all in their opinons deceiued; and that the truth may appeare for the satisfaction of all men, this is my resolution: there is no aduantage absolutely, nor disaduantage in striker, thruster, or warder: and there is a great aduantage in the striker thruster & warder: but in this maner, in the perfection of fight the aduantage consisteth in fight betweene partie and partie: that is, whosoeuer winneth or gaineth the place in true pace, space and time, hath the aduantage, whether he be striker, thruster or warder. And that is my resolution.

*Of Spanish fight with the Rapier.*



He *Spaniard* is now thought to be a better man with his Rapier then is the Italian, Frenchman, high Almaine, or anie other countrie man whatsoeuer, because they in their Rapier-fight stand vpon so manie intricate trickes,

that in all the course of a mans life it shall be hard to learne them, and if they misse in doing the least of them in their fight, they are in danger of death. But the *Spaniard* in his fight, both safely to defend himselfe, and to endanger his enemy, hath but one onely lying, and two wards to learne, wherein a man with small practise in a verie short time may become perfect.

This is the maner of Spanish fight, they stand as braue as they can with their bodies straight vpright, narrow spaced, with their feet continually mouing, as if they were in a dance, holding forth their armes and Rapiers verie straight against the face or bodies of their enemies: & this is the only lying to accomplish that kind of fight. And this note, that as long as any man shall lie in that maner with his arme, and point of his Rapier straight, it shall be impossible for his aduersarie to hurt him, because in that straight holding forth of his arme, which way soeuer a blow shall be made against him, by reason that his Rapier hilt lyeth so farre before him, he hath but a verie litle way to moue, to make his ward perfect, in this maner. If a blow be made at the right side of the head, a verie litle mouing of the hand with the knuckles vpward defendeth that side of the head or bodie, and the point being still out straight, greatly endangereth the striker: and so likewise, if a blow be made at the left side of the head, a verie small turning of the wrist with the knuckles downward, defendeth that side of the head and bodie, and the point of the Rapier much indangereth the hand, arme, face or bodie of the striker: and if anie thrust be made, the wards, by reason of the indirections in mouing the feet in maner of dauncing, as aforesaid, maketh a perfect ward, and still withall the  
point



point greatly endangereth the other. And thus is the Spanish fight perfect: so long as you can keepe that order, and soone learned, and therefore to be accounted the best fight with the Rapier of all other. But note how this Spanish fight is perfect, and you shall see no longer then you can keepe your point straight against your aduersarie: as for example, I haue heard the like iest.

There was a cunning Doctor at his first going to sea, being doubtfull that he should be sea-sicke, an old woman perceiuing the same, said vnto him: Sir, I pray, be of good comfort, I will teach you a tricke to auoid that doubt; here is a fine pibble stone, if you please to accept it, take it with you, and when you be on ship-bord, put it in your mouth, and as long as you shall keepe the same in your mouth, vpon my credit you shall neuer vomit: the Doctor beleeued her, and tooke it thankfully at her hands, and when he was at sea, he began to be sicke, whereupon he presently put the stone in his mouth, & there kept it so long as he possibly could, but through his extreme sicknesse the stone with vomit was cast out of his mouth: then presently he remēbred how the woman had mocked him, and yet her words were true.

Euen so a *Spaniard* hauing his Rapier point put by, may receiue a blow on the head, or a cut ouer the face, hand, or arme, or a thrust in the body or face, and yet his Spanish fight perfect, so long as he can keepe straight the point of his Rapier against the face or body of his aduersarie: which is as easie in that maner of fight to be done, as it was for the Doctor in the extremity of his vomite to keepe the stone in his mouth.

Yet one other pretie iest more, scarce worth the rea-

ding, in commendation of outlandish fight. There was an *Italian* teacher of Defence in my time, who was so excellent in his fight, that he would haue hit anie English man with a thrust, iust vpon any button in his doublet, and this was much spoken of.

Also there was another cunning man in catching of wildgeese, he would haue made no more ado, when he had heard them crie, as the maner of wildgeese is, flying one after another in rowes, but presently looking vp, would tell them, if there had bene a dosen, sixtene, twētic, or more, he would haue taken euerie one. And this tale was manie times told by men of good credit, and much maruelled at by the hearers: & the man that wold haue taken the wildgeese, was of good credite himselfe: marie they said, indeed he did neuer take anie, but at anie time when he had looked vp, and scene them flie in that maner, he would with all his heart haue taken thē, but he could no more tell how to do it, then could the cunning *Italian* Fencer tell how to hit an Englishman, with a thrust iust vpon any one of his buttons, when he listed.

*Illusions for the maintenance of imperfect weapons & false fights, to feare or discourage the vnskilfull in their weapons, from taking a true course or vse, for attaining to the perfect knowledge of true fight.*

- 10 **I**Rst, for the Rapier (saith the *Italian*, or false teacher) I hold it to be a perfect good weapon, because the crosse hindreth not to hold the handle in the hand, to thrust both far & straight, & to vse all maner of aduantages in the wards,  
or

or sodainly to cast the same at the aduerfarie, but with the Sword you are driuen with all the strength of the hand to hold fast the handle. And in the warres I would wish no friend of mine to weare Swords with hilts, because when they are sodainly set vpon, for haste they set their hands vpon their hilts in steed of their handles: in which time it hapneth manie times before they can draw their swords, they are slaine by their enemies. And for Sword and Buckler fight, it is imperfect, because the buckler blindeth the sight, neither would I haue anie man lie aloft with his hand about his head, to strike sound blowes. Strong blowes are naught, especially being set about the head, because therein all the face and bodie is discouered. Yet I confesse, in old times, when blowes were only vsed with short Swords & Bucklers, & back Sword, these kind of fights were good & most manly, but now in these daies fight is altered. Rapiers are longer for aduantage thē swords were wōt to be: whē blowes were vsed, men were so simple in their fight, that they thought him to be a coward, that wold make a thrust or strike a blow beneath the girdle. Againe, if their weapōs were short, as in times past they were, yet fight is better looked into in these dayes, than then it was. Who is it in these daies seeth not that the blow cōpasseth round like a wheele, whereby it hath a longer way to go, but the thrust passeth in a straight line, and therefore commeth a nearer way, and done in a shorter time thē is the blow, and is more deadly then is the blow? Therefore there is no wise man that will strike, vnlesse he be wearie of his life. It is certaine, that the point for aduantage euerie way in fight is to be vsed, the blow is vtterly naught, and not to be vsed. He that fighteth vpon the

*These counterfeit  
shews are enough  
to cary the wisest  
that know not the  
true fight frō the  
false, out of the  
right way.*

*And if their weap-  
ons were short,  
as in times past  
they were, yet  
they could not  
thrust safe at bo-  
dy or face, because  
in gardant fight  
they fall ouer, or  
under the perfect  
crosse of the sword  
& to strike be-  
neath the waste,  
or at the legges, is  
great disaduan-  
tage, because the  
course of the blow  
to the leg is too  
far, & therby the  
head, face, & bo-  
dy is discouered:  
and that was the  
cause in old time,  
that they did not  
thrust nor strike  
at the leg, & not  
for lacke of skill,*

*as in these daies  
we imagine. A  
gaine, if a man  
in these daies  
shold haue fought  
with a long  
sword, they would  
presently haue  
put him into  
Gobbes Trauers.*

blow especially with a short sword, wilbe sore hurt or slaine. The deuill can say no more for the maintenance of errors.

*That a blow commeth continually as neare a way as a thrust,  
and most commonly nearer, stronger,  
more swifter, and is sooner  
done.*

*II  
A confutation  
of their errors.*



He blow, by reaso that it compasseth round like a wheele, whereby it hath a longer way to come, as the Italian Fenser saith, & that the thrust passing in a straight line, commeth a nearer way, and therefore is sooner done then a blow, is not true: these be the proofes.

Let two lie in their perfect strengths and readinesse, wherein the blades of their Rapiers by the motion of the body, may not be crossed of either side, the one to strike, and the other to thrust. Then measure the distance or course wherein the hand and hilt passeth to finish the blow of the one, and the thrust of the other, and you shall find them both by measure, in distance all one. And let anie man of iudgement being seene in the exercise of weapons, not being more addicted vnto nouelties of fight, then vnto truth it selfe, put in measure, and practise these three fights, variable, open, and guardant, and he shall see, that whensoever anie man lyeth at the thrust vpon the variable fight, (where of necessitie most commonly he lyeth, or otherwise not possible to keepe his Rapier from crossing at the blow & thrust, vpon the open or gardant fight,) that the blowes & thrustes from these two fightes, come a nearer way, and a more stronger

stronger and swifter course then doth the thrust, out of the variable fight. And thus for a generall rule, where-soeuer the Thruster lyeth, or out of what fight soeuer he fighteth, with his Rapier, or Rapier and Dagger, the blow in his course commeth as neare, and nearer, and more swift and stronger then doth the thrust.

*Perfect fight standeth vpon both blow and thrust, therefore the thrust is not onely to be vsed.*

**T**Hat there is no fight perfect without both 12  
blow and thrust: neither is there anie cer-  
taine rule to be set downe for the vse of the  
point onely, these be the reasons: In fight *This in truth  
cannot be denied.*  
there are manie motions, with the hand, bodie, and  
feet, and in euerie motion the place of the hand is al-  
tered, & because by the motions of the hand, the altering  
of the places of the hand, the changes of lyings, wards,  
and breaking of thrustes, the hand will sometimes be in  
place to strike, some times to thrust, sometimes after a  
blow to thrust, and sometimes after a thrust to strike, &  
sometimes in place where you may strike, and cannot  
thrust without losse of time, and sometimes in place  
where you may thrust, and cannot strike without losse of  
time, and sometimes in place where you can neither  
strike nor thrust, vnlesse you fight vpon both blow and  
thrust, nor able to defend your selfe by ward or going  
backe, because your space wilbe too wide, and your dis-  
tance lost. And sometimes when you haue made a  
thrust, a ward or breaking is taken in such sort with the  
Dagger or blade of the Sword, that you cā neither thrust  
again, nor defend your selfe vnlesse you do strike, which

braue nations haue both felt and feared. Our ploughmen haue mightily preuailed against them, as also against Maisters of Defence both in Schooles and countries, that haue taken vpon thē to stand vpon Schoole-trickes and iugling gambolds: whereby it grew to a common speech among the countrie-men, Bring me to a Fencer, I will bring him out of his fence trickes with good downe right blowes, I will make him forget his fence trickes I will warrant him. I speake not against Maisters of Defence indeed, they are to be honoured, nor against the Science, it is noble, and in mine opiniō to be preferred next to Diuinitie; for as Diuinitie preserueth the soule from hell and the diuell, so doth this noble Science defend the bodie from wounds & slaughter. And moreouer, the exercising of weapons putteth away aches, griefes, and diseases, it increaseth strength, and sharpneth the wits, it giueth a perfect iudgement, it expelleth melancholy, cholericke and euill conceits, it keepeth a man in breath, perfect health, and long life. It is vnto him that hath the perfection thereof, a most friendly and comfortable companion when he is alone, hauing but only his weapon about him, it putteth him out of all feare, & in the warres and places of most danger it maketh him bold, hardie, and valiant.

And for as much as this noble and most mightie nation of Englishmen, of their good natures, are alwayes most louing, verie credulous, & ready to cherish & protect strāgers: yet that through their good natures they neuer more by strangers or false teachers may be deceiued, once againe I am most humbly to admonish thē, or such as shal find in themselues a disposition or desire to learne their weapons of them, that from henceforth as  
stran-

you may foundly doe, and go free, and sometimes when you strike, a ward wilbetaken in such sort, that you cannot strike againe, nor defend your selfe, vnlesse you thrust, which you may safely doe and goe free. So to conclude, there is no perfection in the true fight, without both blow and thrust, nor certaine rule to be set downe for the point onely.

*That the blow is more dangerous and deadly in fight, then a thrust, for prooffe thereof to be made according with Art, an Englishman holdeth argument against an Italian.*

*Italian.*

13



Hich is more dangerous or deadly in fight of a blow or a thrust?

*Englishman.*

This question is not propounded according to art, because there is no fight perfect without both blow and thrust.

*Italian.*

Let it be so, yet opinions are otherwise holden, that the thrust is onely to be vsed, because it commeth a nearer way, and is more dangerous and deadly, for these reasons: first the blow compasseth round like a wheele, but the thrust passeth in a straight line, therefore the blow by reason of the compasse, hath a longer way to go then the thrust, & is therefore longer in doing, but the thrust passeth in a straight line, therefore hath shorter way to go the hath the blow, & is therefore done in a shorter time, & is therefore much better then the blow, & more dangerous and deadly, because if a thrust do hit the face or bodie, it indangereth life, and most commonly death ensueth: but if the blow hit the bodie, it is not so dangerous.

*Englishman.*

Let your opiniōs be what they wil, but that the thrust cōmeth a nearer way, & is sooner done then the blow, is not true: & for prooffe thereof reade the twelfth Paradox.

And now will I set downe probable reasons, that the blow is better then the thrust, and more dangerous and deadly. First, the blow commeth as neare a way, & most cōmonly nearer then doth the thrust, & is therefore done

*The blow more dangerous then the thrust.*

in a shorter time then is the thrust: therefore in respect of time, wherupon stādeth the perfection of fight, the blow is much better then the thrust. Againe, the force of the thrust passeth straight, therefore any crosse being indirectly made, the force of a child may put it by: but the force of a blow passeth indirectly, therefore must be directly warded in the counterchecke of his force: which cānot be done but by the cōuenient strength of a man, & with true crosse in true time, or else will not safely defēd him: and is therefore much better, & more dāgerous thē the thrust, and againe, the thrust being made through the hand, arme, or leg, or in many places of the body and face, are not deadly, neither are they maimes, or losse of limmes or life, neither is he much hindred for the time in his fight, as long as the bloud is hot: for example.

I haue knowne a Gētle mā hurt in Rapier fight, in nine or ten places through the bodie, armes, and legges, and yet hath continued in his fight, & afterward hath slaine the other, and come home and hath bene cured of all his wōuds without maimē, & is yet liuing. But the blow being strōgly made, taketh somtimes cleane away the hand from the arme, hath manie times bene seene. Againe, a full blow vpon the head or face with a short sharpe sword, is most commonly death. A full blow vpon the

*The blow cutteth off the hand, the arme, the leg, and sometimes the head.*



necke, shoulder, arme, or legge, indangereth life, cutteth off the veines, muscles, and sinewes, perisheth the bones: these wounds made by the blow, in respect of perfect healing, are the losse of limes, or maimes incurable for euer.

And yet more for the blow: a ful blow vpon the head, face, arme, leg, or legs, is death, or the partie so wounded in the mercie of him that shall so wound him. For what man shall be able long in fight to stand vp, either to reuenge, or defend himselfe, hauing the veines, muscles, and sinewes of his hand, arme, or leg cleane cut a-funder? or being dismembred by such wound vpon the face or head, but shall be enforced therby, and through the losse of bloud, the other a litle dallying with him, to yeeld himself, or leaue his life in his mercie?

*He that giueth  
the first wound  
with a strong  
blow, commaundeth  
the life of  
the other.*

And for plainer deciding this cōtrouersie betweene the blow and the thrust, consider this short note. The blow commeth manie wayes, the thrust doth not so. The blow commeth a nearer way then a thrust most commonly, and is therefore sooner done. The blow requirereth the strength of a man to be warded; but the thrust may be put by, by the force of a child. A blow vpon the hand, arme, or legge is a maim incurable; but a thrust in the hand, arme, or legge is to be recouered. The blow hath manie parts to wound, and in euerie of them commaundeth the life; but the thrust hath but a few, as the bodie or face, and not in euerie part of them neither.

*Of the difference betwixt the true fight & the false: wherein consisteth (the Principles being had with the direction of the foure Gouvernors) the whole perfection of fight with all manner of weapons.*



He true fights be these: whatsoever is <sup>14</sup> done with the hand before the foot or feet is true fight. The false fights be these: whatsoever is done with the foot or feet before the hand, is false, because the hand is swifter then the foot, the foot or feet being a slower mouer then the hand: the hand in that maner of fight is tied to the time of the foot or feet, and being tied thereto, hath lost his freedome, and is made thereby as slow in his motions as the foot or feet: and therfor that fight is false.

*Of euill orders or customes in our English Fence-schools, & of the old or ancient teaching of weapons, & things very necessarie to be continued for the auoiding of errors, and reuiuing and continuance of our ancient vveapons, and most victorious fight againe.*



Here is in my opiniõ in our Fence-schools <sup>15</sup> an euill order or custome in these dayes vsed, the which, if it might stand with the good liking of our Maisters of Defence, I thinke it necessarie to be left: for as long as it is vsed, it shall be hard to make a good Scholler.

That is this, at the single Sword, Sword and Dagger, & Sword and Buckler, they forbid the thrust, & at the single Rapier, and Rapier & Dagger, they forbid the blow. Either they are both together best, or the thrust altogether best, or the blow altogether best. If the thrust be best, why do we not vse it at the single Sword, Sword & Dagger, & Sword and Buckler. If the blow be best, why do we not vse it at the single Rapier, Rapier & Poinyard? But knowing by the Art of Armes, that no fight is perfect without both blow and thrust, why do we not vse and teach both blow and thrust? But howsoeuer this we dayly see, that whē two meet in fight, whether they haue skill or none, vnlesse such as haue tied thēselues to that boyish, *Italian*, weake, imperfect fight, they both strike and thrust, and how shall he then do, that being much taught in schoole, neuer learned to strike, nor how to defend a strong blow? & how shall he thē do, that being brought vp in Fēce-schoole, that neuer learned to thrust with the single Sword, Sword and Dagger, and Sword and Buckler, nor how at these weapōs to breake a thrust? Surely, I thinke a downe right fellow, that neuer came in schoole, vsing such skill as nature yeeldeth out of his courage, strength, and agilitie, with good downe right blowes and thrusts among, as shall best frame in his hands, shold put one of these imperfect schollers greatly to his shifts. Besides, there are now in these dayes no gripes, closes, wrestlings, striking with the hilts, daggers, or bucklers, vsed in Fence-schooles. Our ploughmen by nature wil do all these things with great strēgth & agility: but the Schooleman is altogether vnacquainted with these things. He being fast tyed to such school-play as he hath learned, hath lost thereby the benefite  
of

of nature, and the plowman is now by nature without art a farre better man then he. Therefore in my opinion, as long as we barre anie maner of play in schoole, we shall hardly make a good scholler: there is no maner of teaching comparable to the old ancient teaching, that is, first their quarters, then their wardes, blowes, thrusts, and breaking of thrustes, then their Closés and Gripes, striking with the hilts, Daggers, Bucklers, Wraftlings, striking with the foote or knee in the Coddés, and all these are safely defended in learning perfectly of the Gripes. And this is the ancient teaching, the perfectest & most best teaching; and without this teaching, there shall neuer scholler be made able, doe his vttermost, nor fight safe. Againe their swordes in schooles are too long by almost halfe a foote to vncrosse, without going backe with the feete, within distance or perfectly to strike or thrust within the halfe or quarter sword. And in seruing of the Prince, when men do meet together in publique fight, are vtterly naught and vnseruiceable. The best lengthes for perfect teaching of the true fight to be vsed and continued in Fence schooles, to accord with the true statures of all men, are these. The blade to be a yard and an inch for meane statures, and for men of tall statures, a yard and three or foure inches, and no more. And I would haue the Rapier continued in schooles, alwaies readie for such as shall thinke themselves cunning, or shall haue delight to play with that imperfect weapon. Prouided alwaies, that the Schoolemaister or Vsher play with him with his short Sword, plying him with all maner of fight according to the true art: this being continued the truth shall flourish, the lye shalbe beaten downe, and all nations not ha-

*In the warres there is no obseruation of Staccato, Imbrocatus, times, nor answers.*

*Long weapons imperfect.*

uing the true science, shall come with all gladnesse to the valiant and most braue English maisters of Defence to learne the true fight for their defence.

16 *The grounds or Principles of true fight with all  
maner of weapons.*

**F**irst Iudgement, Lyings, Distance, Direction, Pafe, Space, Place, Time, Indirection, Motion, Action, generall and continuall Motion, Progression, Regression, Trauersing, and Treading of groundes, Blowes, Thrustes, Faulses, Doubles, Slipes, Wardes, breakings of Thrusts, Closures, Gripes, & Wrastringes, Guardant fight, Open fight, Variable fight, and Close fight, and foure Gouvernours.

*The wardes of all maner of weapons.*

17 **A**ll single weapons haue foure wardes, and all double weapons haue eight wardes. The single sword hath two with the point vp, and two with the point downe. The Staffe and all maner of weapons to be used with both handes haue the like.

The Sword and Buckler, and Sword and Dagger are double weapons, and haue eight wardes, two with the point vp, and two with the point downe, and two for the legges with the point downe, the point to be caried for both sides of the legges, with the knuckles downward, and two wardes with the Dagger or Buckler for the head. The Forreft bill is a double weapon by reason  
of

of the head, and therefore hath eight wardes, foure with the Staffe, foure with the head, foure of them to be vsed as with the staffe, and the other foure with the head, the one vp, the other downe, and the other sidewaies.

*The names and numbers of times appertaining vnto fight both true and false.*



Here are eight times, whereof foure are 18 true, and foure are false: the true times be these.

The time of the hand.

The time of the hand and bodie.

The time of the hand, bodie and foote.

The time of the hand, bodie and feete.

*The false times be these.*

The time of the foote.

The time of the foote and bodie.

The time of the foote, bodie and hand.

The time of the feete, bodie and hand.

Thus haue I thought good to separate and make knowne the true times from the false, with the true wardes thereto belonging, that thereby the rather in practising of weapons, a true course may be taken for the auoiding of errours and euill customes, and speedie attaining of good habit or perfect being in the true vse and knowledge of all maner of weapons.

*Of the length of weapons, and how euerie man may fit himselfe in the perfect length of his weapon, according to his owne stature, with briefe reasons wherefore they ought to be so.*

19



O know the perfect length of your Sword, you shall stand with your sword and dagger drawn, as you see this picture, keeping out straight your dagger arme, drawinge backe your sword as far as conueniently you can, not opening the elbow ioynt of your sword arme: and looke what you can draw within your dagger, that is the iust length of your sword, to be made according to your owne stature.

*If the sword be longer, you can hardly ouerrosse without going backe with your feet. If shorter, thi you can hardly make a true crosse without putting in of your feet, the which times are too long to answer the time of the hand.*

*The like reasons for the short staffe, half Pike, Forrest bill, Partisan, or Glene, or such like weapons of perfect length.*



The perfect length of your two hand sword is, the blade to be the length of the blade of your single sword.

To know the perfect length of your short staffe, or half Pike, Forrest bil, Partisan, or Gleue, or such like weapons of vantage and perfect lengths, you shall stand vpright, holding the staffe vpright close by your body, with your left hād, reaching with your right hand your staffe as high as you can, and then allow to that length a space to set both your hands, when you come to fight, wherein you may conueniently strike, thrust, and ward, & that is the iust length to be made according to your stature. And this note, that these lengths will commonly fall out to be eight or nine foot long, and will fit, although not iust, the statures of all men, without any hindrance at all vnto them in their fight, because in any weapon wherin the hands may be remoued, and at libertie, to make the weapon longer or shorter in fight at his pleasure, a foot of the staffe behind the backmost hand doth no harme. And wherfore these weapons ought to be of the lengths aforesaid, and no shorter, these are the reasons: If they should be shorter, then the long staffe, Morris Pike, and such like weapons ouer and about the perfect length, should haue great vantage against them, because he may come boldly and safe without anie gard or ward, to the place where he may thrust home, and at euery thrust put him in danger of his life: but if these weapons be of their perfect lengths, then can the long staffe, the Morris Pike, or anie other longer weapon ly nowhere in true space, but shall be still within compasse of the crosse, to crosse and vncrosse, wherby he may safely passe home to the place, where he may strike or thrust him that hath the long weapon, in the head, face, or body at his pleasure.



*An Admonition.*

strangers shall take vpon them to come hither to teach this noble & most valiant, & victorious nation to fight, that first, before they learne of them, they cause a sufficient triall of them to be made, whether the excellencie of their skill be such as they professe or no, the triall to be very requisite & reasonable, euen such as I my selfe would be contented withall, if I should take vpon me to go in their cuntry to teach their nation to fight. And this is the triall: they shall play with such weapos as they professe to teach withall, three bouts apeece with three of the best English Maisters of Defence, & three bouts apeece with three vnskilful valiant men, and three bouts apeece with three resolute men halfdrunke. Then if they can defend theselues against these maisters of Defence, and hurt, and go free from the rest, then are they to be honored, cherished, and allowed for perfect good teachers, what countrey men soeuer they be: but if of anie of these they take foile, then are they imperfect in their profession, their fight is false, & they are false teachers, deceiuers and murtherers, and to be punished accordingly, yet no worse punishment vnto them I wish, then such as in their triall they shall find.

*A great fauor to giue them choice of their weapons, because professors of armes ought to be skilfull with all maner of weapns.*


*There are foure especiall markes to know the Italian fight is imperfect. & that the Italian teachers and setters forth of books of Defence, neuer had the perfection of the true fight.*

**T**he first marke is, they seldome fight in their owne country vnarmed, commonly in this sort, a paire of Gantlettes vpon their hands, and a good shirt of maile vpon their bodies.


The secōd marke is, that neither the Italians, nor any

*Yet they perswade vs that the crosse of the Rapier without hilt or gantlet is sufficient.*

*Of the lengths of the Battel axe, Halbard, or blacke Bill,  
or such like vveapons of weight, appertaining  
vnto gard or battell.*

- 20  N anie of these weapons there needeth no iust length, but commonly they are, or ought to be fiue or sixe foot long, & may not well be vsed much longer, because of their weights: and being weapons for the warres or battell, when men are ioyned close together, may thrust, & strike sound blowes, with great force both strong and quicke: and finally for the iust lengths of all other shorter or longer weapons to be gouerned with both hands, there is none: neither is there anie certaine lengthes in anie maner of weapons to be vsed with one hand, ouer or vnder the iust length of the single sword.  
*Thus endeth the length of weapons.*

*Of the vantages of weapons in their kinds, places, & times,  
both in priuate and publike fight.*

- 21  Irst I will begin with the worst weapon, an imperfect and insufficient weapon, and not worth the speaking of; but now being highly esteemed, therefore not to be left vnremembred; that is, the single Rapier, and Rapier and Poiniard.

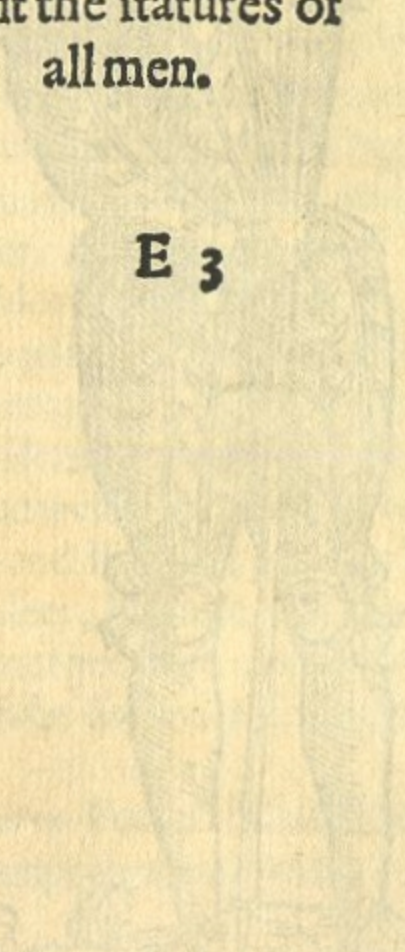
The single Sword hath the vantage against the single Rapier.

The Sword and Dagger hath the vantage against the Rapier and Poiniard.

The

**A**S I haue here made a figuratiue demon-  
stration, to know the perfect length of the  
Sword, as afore is sayd; so haue I in the page fo-  
llowing, for the plainer vnderstanding of the  
Reader, set foorth a forme of standing, to know  
the lengths of the short Staffe, halfe Pike, Fo-  
rest Bill, Partisan and Gleue, or such like  
weapons of aduantage, as shall also  
best fit the statures of  
all men.

**E 3**





The Sword & Target hath aduantage against the Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poiniard.

The Sword and Buckler hath aduantage against the Sword and Target, the Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poiniard.

The two hand Sword, hath the vantage against the Sword and Target, the Sword and Buckler, the Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poiniard.

The Battel-axe, the Halbard, the Blacke-bill, or such like weapons of weight, appertaining vnto guard or battell, are all one in fight, and haue aduantage against the two hand Sword, the Sword and Buckler, the Sword and Target, the Sword & dagger, or the Rapier & Poiniard.

The short staffe or halfe Pike, Forrest-bill, Partisan, or Gleue, or such like weapons of perfect length, haue the vantage against the Battel-axe, the Halbard, the Blacke-bill, the two hand sword, the Sword and Target, and are too hard for two Swords and Daggers, or two Rapiers and Poiniards with Gantlets, and for the long staffe and Morris Pike.

The long Staffe, Morris Pike, or Iauelin, or such like weapons about the perfect length, haue aduantage against all maner of weapons, the short staffe, Welch hooke, Partisan, or Gleue, or such like weapons of vantage excepted: yet too weake for two Swords and Daggers or two Swords and Bucklers, or two Rapiers and Poiniards with Gantlets, because they are too long to thrust, strike, and turne speedily: and by reason of the large distance, one of the Sword and Dagger-men will get behind him.

The Welch hooke or Forrest bill, hath aduantage against all maner of weapons whatsoever.

Yet vnderstand, that in battels, and where varietie of weapons be, amongst multitudes of men and horses, the Sword and Target, the two hand Sword, the Battel-axe, the Blacke-bill, and Halbard, are better weapons, and more dangerous in their offence and forces, then is the Sword and Buckler, shoft staffe, long staffe, or Forrest bill. The Sword and Target leadeth vpon Shot, and in troupes defendeth thrusts and blowes giuen by battel-axe, Halbards, Blacke-bill, or two hand swords, far better then can the Sword and Buckler.

The Morris Pike defendeth the battell from both horse and man, much better then can the shoft staffe, long staffe, or Forrest bill. Againe, the Battel-axe, the Halbard, the Blacke bill, the two hand sword, and Sword & Target, amongst armed men and troopes, when men are come together, by reason of their weights, shortnesse, and great forces, do much more offend the enemye, & are then much better weapons, then is the shoft staffe, the long Staffe, or Forrest bill.

*Of the insufficiencie and disaduantages of the  
Rapiers-fight in Battell.*



Or the single Rapier, or Rapier & Poiniard, they are imperfect & insufficient weapons: and especially in the seruice of the Prince, when men shall ioyne together, what seruice can a souldier do with a Rapier, a childish toy wherwith a man can do nothing but thrust, nor that neither, by reason of the length, and in euerie mo- uing when blowes are a dealing, for lacke of a hilt is in daunger to haue his hand or arme cut off, or his head  
clouen ?

clouen . And for Wardes and Gripes, they haue none, neither can any of these fine Rapier men, for lacke of vse, tell howe to strike a sound blow.

*Of the vantages and sufficiency of the short  
Sword fight in battell.*



He short Sword, and Sword and Dagger, 23 are perfect good weapons, and especially in seruice of the Prince. What a braue weapon is a short sharpe light Sword, to carie, to draw, to be nimble withall, to strike, to cut, to thrust both strong and quicke. And what a goodly defence is a strong single hilt, when men are clustering and hurling together, especially where varietie of weapons be, in their motions to defend the hand, head, face, and bodies, from blowes, that shalbe giuen sometimes with Swordes, sometimes with two handed Swordes, battell Axe, Halbardes, or blacke Billes, and sometimes men shalbe so neare together, that they shall haue no space, scarce to vse the blades of their Swordes belowe their wastes, then their hilts (their handes being aloft) defendeth from the blowes, their handes, armes, heads, faces, and bodies: then they lay on, hauing the vse of blowes and Gripes, by force of their armes with their hilts, strong blowes, at the head, face, armes, bodies, and shoulders, and manie times in hurling together, scope is giuen to turne downe their points, with violent thrusts at their faces, and bodies, by reason of the shortnesse of their blades, to the mightie annoyance, discomfort, and great destruction of their enimies. One valiant man with a Sword in his hand, will doe better seruice, then ten *Italians*, or Italianated with the Rapiers.

*That all maner of double weapons, or weapons to be vsed with both handes, haue aduantage against the single Rapier or single Sword, there is no question to be made.*

*That the Sword and Buckler hath the vantage against the Sword and Dagger.*

24



He Dagger is an imperfect ward, although borne out straight, to make the Space narrow, whereby by a litle mouing of the hand, may be sufficient to faue both sides of the head, or to breake the thrust from the face or body, yet for lacke of the circumference his hand will lie too high or too low, or too weake, to defend both blow and thrust: if he lye straight with narrow space, which is best to breake the thrust, then he lieth too weake, and too lowe to defend his head from a strong blow: if he lye high, that is strong to defend his head, but then his space wilbe too wide to breake the thrust from his bodie. The Dagger serueth well at length to put by a thrust, and at the halfe Sword to crosse the Sword blade, to driue out the Agent, and put him in danger of his life, and safely in anie of these two actions to defend himselfe. But the Buckler, by reason of his circumference and weight, being well caried, defendeth safely in all times and places, whether it be at the point, haife Sword, the head, bodie, and face, from all maner of blowes and thrustes whatsoeuer, yet I haue heard manie hold opinion, that the Sword and Dagger hath aduantage of the Sword and Buckler, at the Close, by reason of the length and point of the Dagger: and at the point



point of the Sword, they can better see to ward then with a Buckler. But I neuer knew anie, that wanne the Close with the Dagger vpon the Sword and Budkler, but did wish himselfe out againe: for distance being broken, iudgement faileth, for lacke of time to iudge, and the eie is deceiued by the swift motion of the hand, and for lacke of true Space with the dagger hand, which cannot be otherwise, for lacke of the circumference to defend both blow and thrust, it is impossible for lacke of true Space in iust time, the agent hauing gotten the true place, to defend one thrust or blow of an hundred. And it is most certaine, whosoever closeth with Sword and Dagger, against the Sword and Buckler, is in great danger to be slaine. Likewise at the point within distance, if he stand to defend both blow and thrust with his Dagger, for lacke of true space and distance, if he had the best eye of anie man, and could see perfectly, which way the thrust or blow commeth, and when it commeth, as it is not to be denied but he may, yet his space being too large, it helpeth him nothing, because one mans hand being as swift as another mans hand, both being within distance, he that striketh or thrusteth, hurteth the warder: the reason is this: the Agent being in the first motion although in his offence, further to go then the warder to defend, yet the warders space being too large, the blow or thrust wilbe performed home, before the warder can come to the true place to defend himselfe, and although the warder doe perfectly see the blow or thrust comming, so shall he see his owne ward so farre from the true place of his defence, that although he doe at that instant time, plainly see the blow or thrust comming, it shalbe impossible for him to recouer the

true place of his ward, till he be wounded. But let the warder with the dagger say, that it is not true which I haue said, for as he hath eies to behold the blow or thrust cōming, so hath he as good time to defend himself. Herein he shal find himself deceiued to; this is the reason: the hand is the swiftest motion, the foot is the slowest, without distance the hand is tied to the motion of the feet, wherby the time of the hand is made as slow as the foot, because thereby we redeeme euerie time lost vpon his comming by the slow motion of the foot, & haue time therby to iudge, whē & how he can performe any actiō whatsoeuer, and so haue we the time of the hand to the time of the feet. Now is the hād in his owne course more swifter then the foot or eye, therefore within distance the eye is deceiued, & iudgement is lost; and that is another cause that the warder with the dagger, although he haue perfect eyes, is stil within distance deceiued. For prooffe that the hand is more swifter then the eye, & thereby deceiue the eyes: let two stand within distance, & let one of thē stand still to defend himself, & let the other flourish & false with his hand, and he shal continually with the swift motions of his hand, deceiue the eyes of him that standeth watching to defend himselfe, & shal continually strike him in diuerse places with his hand. Againe, take this for an example, that the eyes by swift motions are deceiued: turne a turne-wheele swift, & you shall not be able to discern with your best eies how many spokes be in the wheele, no nor whether there be any spokes at all, or whereof the wheele is made, and yet you see when the wheele standeth still there is a large distance betweene euerie spoke. He that will not belecue that the swift motion of the hand in fight will deceiue the eye, shal stare a broad

*The eye is deceiued by the swift motion of the hād.*

broad with his eyes, & feele himself soundly hurt, before he shall perfectly see how to defend himselfe. So those that trust to their sight, the excellēcy of a good eye, their great cunning, & perfect wards of the daggers, that they can better see to ward then with a buckler, shall euer be deceiued. And whē they be wounded, they say the Agēt was a litle too quicke for them; sometimes they say they bare their dagger a litle too low : sometimes they are thrust vnder the dagger, then they say, they bare it a litle too high : sometimes a thrust being strongly made , they being soundly paid therewith, say, they were a litle too slow, & sometimes they be soundly paid with a thrust, & they thinke they were a litle too quick. So they that practise or thinke to be cunning in the dagger ward, are all the dayes of their liues learning, and are neuer taught.


*The Dagger is an imperfect ward.*

*That the Sword and Buckler hath the vantage against the Sword and Target.*



He Sword & Target together hath but two 25 fights; that is, the variable fight, & the close fight, for the close fight, the nūber of his feet are too many to take against any mā of skill hauing the Sword & buckler, & for the variable fight although not so many in number, yet too many to win the place with his foot to strike or thrust home. The sword & buckler-man can out of his variable, opē & gardāt fight, come brauely off & on, false and double, strike & thrust home, & make a true crosse vpon euery occasion at his pleasure: if the Sword & Target mā will flie to his gardāt fight, the bredth of his Target will not suffer it, if to his open fight, thē hath the Sword & Buckler man in effect the sword and Buckler to the single, for in that fight by reason of the bredth, the target can do litle good or none at all.

*The short Staffe.*

26  Now for the vantage of the short Staffe against the Sword and Buckler, Sword & Target, two hand sword, single Sword, Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poi- niard, there is no great question to be made in anie of these weapons: whensoever anie blow or thrust shall be strongly made with the staffe, they are euer in false place, in the cariage of the wards, for if at any of these sixe weapons he carie his ward high & strōg for his head, as of necessitie he must carie it verie high, otherwise it will be too weake to defend a blow being strongly made at the head, then will his space be too wide, in due time to breake the thrust from his bodie. Againe, if he carie his ward lower, thereby to be in equall space for readinesse to breake both blow & thrust, then in that place his ward is too low, and too weake to defend the blow of the staffe: for the blow being strongly made at the head vpon that ward, will beate downe the ward and his head together, and put him in great danger of his life. And here is to be noted, that if he fight well, the staffe-man neuer striketh but at the head, and thrusteth presently vnder at the body: and if a blow be first made, a thrust followeth; & if a thrust be first made, a blow followeth; and in doing of any of them, the one breedeth the other: so that howsoever anie of these sixe weapons shall carie his ward strongly to defend the first, he shall be too farre in space to defend the second, whether it be blow or thrust.

Yet againe for the short staffe: the short staffe hath the vantage against the Battel-axe, blacke-bill, or Hal- bard,

bard: the short staffe hath the vantage, by reason of the nimbleness and length: he will strike and thrust freely, and in better and swifter time then can the Battel-axe, Blacke-bill, or Halbard: and by reason of his iudgement, distance and time, fight safe. And this resolue vpon, the short staffe is the best weapon against all maner of weapons, the Forrest bill excepted.

Also the short staffe hath aduantage against two Swords and Daggers, or two Rapiers, Poiniards and Gantlets, the reasons and causes before are for the most part set downe already, the which being well considered, you shall plainly see, that whensoever anie one of the Sword & Dagger men, or Rapier and Poiniard men shall breake his distance, or suffer the Staffe-man to breake his, that man which did first breake his distance, or suffer the distance to be won against him, is presently in danger of death. And this cannot in reason be denied, because the distance appertaining to the Staffe-man, either to keepe or breake, standeth vpon the mouing of one large space alwayes at the most, both for his offence or safety. The other two in the breach of their distance to offend the Staffe-man, haue alwayes foure paces at the least therein they fall too great in number with their feet, and too short in distance to offend the Staffe-man. Now there resteth no more to be spoken of, but how the Staffe-man shall behaue himselfe to keepe that distance, that one of the Sword & Dagger men get not behind him, while the other shal busie him before: to do that is very easie, by reason of the smal number of his feet, for by a verie small turning of his feet, as it were in the Center point of a wheele, the other two to keepe their distance, are driuen to runne twentie foote for one, as it

*The short staffe  
or half Pike hath  
the aduantage a-  
gainst two sword  
and dagger men,  
or two Rapiers.  
Poiniards, and  
Gantlets.*

of their best scholers do neuer fight, but they are most cōmonly fore hurt, or one or both of them slaine.

The third marke is, they neuer teach their scholers, nor set downe in their bookes anie perfect lengthes of their weapons, without the which no man can by nature or Art against the perfect lēgth fight safe, for being too short, their times are too long, and spaces too wide for their defence, and being too long, they wilbe vpon euerie crosse that shall happen to be made, whether it be done by skil or chance, in great danger of death; because the Rapier being too long, the crosse cannot be vndone in due time, but may be done by going backe with the feete; but that time is alwaies too long to answere the time of the hand, therefore euery man ought to haue a weapon according to his owne stature: the tall man must haue his weapon longer then the man of meane stature, or else he hath wrong in his defence, & the man of meane stature must haue his weapon longer then the man of smal stature, or else he hath wrong in his defence; & the man of smal stature must beware that he feed not himself with this vaine cōcept, that he wil haue his weapon long, to reach as farre as the tall man, for therin he shal haue great disaduantage, both in making of a strong crosse, and also in vncrossing againe, and in keeping his point from crossing, and when a crosse is made vpon him, to defend himself, or indanger his enemy, or to redeeme his lost times. Againe Rapiers longer, then is conuenient to accord with the true statures of men, are alwaies too long or too heauie to keepe their bodies in due time from the crosse of the light short sword of perfect length, the which being made by the skilfull out of any of the foure true times, vpon any of the foure chiefe

were vpon the vttermoſt part or circle of the wheele : all this while the Staffe-man is verie well. Then it cometh thus to paſſe, whether they both labour to get behind him, or one keepe directly before him whileſt the other get behind him , yet before that be brought to paſſe , they ſhal either be both before him or iuſt againſt both ſides of him: at which time ſoeuer the Staffe-man finding either of them within diſtance, he preſently in making of his play, ſlayeth with blow or thruſt one of thē, or at the leaſt putteth him in great danger of his life. If the Staffe-man take his time , when they are both before him , that is to ſay, before they come to the half ring, iuſt againſt both ſides of the Staffe-man , then he that is neareſt within diſtance is ſlain by blow or thruſt , or put in great danger of his life. But if the Sword and Dagger men do keepe their diſtance vntill they come to the iuſt halfe ring right againſt the ſides of the Staffe-man , and then breake diſtance, that man that firſt breakeſt diſtance is ſlaine with blow or thruſt, or fore hurt, and in great danger of death:and the Staffe-man in making that play at that inſtant, muſt turne with one large pace, the which he may eaſily do , before the other can get neare enough to offend him , by reaſon that he hath to make with his feet but one large pace , but the other hath at the leaſt three paces. But if the Sword and Dagger-men will in the time that they be before him, keep their diſtance in the time of their being vpon the middle part of the outside of the circle, right againſt both ſides of him, & will labor with all heed & diligence to be both or one of thē behind him , that troubleth the Staffe-man nothing at all, for in that very time, when he findeth them paſt the middle part of the circle, he preſently

sently turneth, by the which he shall naturally set himselfe as it were in a triangle, and both the sword and dagger-men, shall thereby stand both before him in true distance of three paces, from offending of him at the least, as at the first they did. And take this for a true ground, there is no man able to ward a sound blow with the Sword and Dagger, nor Rapier, Poinyard, and Gantlet, being strongly made at the head, with the Staffe, and run in withall, the force of both handes is such, being in his full motion and course, that although the other do carie his ward high and strong with both handes, yet his feete being mouing from the ground, the great force of the blow will strike him with his ward, and all downe flat to ground. But if he stand fast with his feete, he may with both weapons together, strongly defend his head from the blow, but then you are sufficiently instructed, the thrust being presently made, after the blow full at the bodie, it is impossible in due time to breake it, by reason of the largenesse of his space.

*The short Staffe hath the vantage against the long staffe,  
and Morris Pike, and the Forrest bill against all  
maner of weapons.*



He reasons are these. The short Staffe 27  
hath the vantage of the long Staffe and  
Morris Pike in his strength & narrownes  
of space in his foure wardes of defence.  
And the Forrest bill hath the vantage of  
all maner of weapons in his strength and narrownes  
of space in his eight wardes of defence: and the rather be-  
cause the Bill hath two wardes for one against the Staffe



*A question.*

or Morris Pike, that is to say, foure with the Staffe, and foure with the head, and is more offensiue then is the Staffe or Morris Pike: yet a questiō may be made by the vnskilfull, concerning the fight between the long Staffe and the short, in this sort: Why should not the long Staffe haue aduantage against short Staffe, since that the long Staffe-man, being at libertie with his handes, may make his long Staffe both long and short for his best aduantage, when he shall thinke it good, and therefore when he shall find himselfe ouermatched in the length of his Staffe, by the strength of the short Staffe, and narrownesse of space in his foure wardes of defence, he can presently by drawing backe of his Staffe in his handes, make his Staffe as short as the others, and so be readie to fight with him at his owne length. To this I answer, that when the long Staffe-man is driuen there to lye, the length of his Staffe that will lye behind him, will hinder him to strike, thrust, ward, or goe backe in due time. Neither can he turne the contrarie end of his Staffe to keepe out the short Staffe man from the Close, nor safely to defend himselfe at his comming in.

*Answer.**Againe of the vantages of weapons.*

28



Take this for a general rule, all long Staues, Morris Pikes, Forreste bills, Iauelins, or such like long weapons, of what sort foeuer, being about the true lengthes, the shortest haue the aduantage, because they can crosse and vncrosse in shorter time then can the longer: and all maner of short weapons to be vsed with both handes, as staues, and such like, being vnder the perfect lengthes, the

the longest haue the aduantage, and all maner of weapons to be vsed with one hand, that are aboue the perfect length of the single Sword, the shortest haue the vantage, and all maner of weapons vnder the iust length of the short Sword, as Fauchions, Skaines, or Hangers, Woodkniues, Daggers, and such like short weapons of imperfect lengthes, the longest haue the aduantage, because the fight of these weapons consist within the halfe or quarter Sword, wherein by the swift motions of their handes, their eyes are deceiued, and in those weapons, commonly for their handes lieth no defence. And if two shall fight with staues or Swordes, or what weapons soeuer, the one of them hauing his weapon longer then the perfect length, and the other his weapon shorter then the perfect length, he that hath the longest hath the vantage, because the shortest can make no true Crosse in true time. The short Staffe or halfe Pike, Forrest bill, Partisan, or Gleue, or such like weapons of perfect length, to be vsed with both handes, haue the aduantage against two Swordes and Daggers, or two Rapiers, Poiniardes, and Gantlets, and against all other weapons whatsoeuer, the Forrest bill excepted.

*Againe for the short Staffe or halfe Pike.*

**T**He short Staffe is most commonly the 29 best weapon of all other, although other weapons may be more offensive, and especially against manie weapons together, by reason of his nimbleness and swift motions, and is not much inferiour to the Forrest bill, although the Forrest bill be more offensive, and hath more wardes, because

the Staffe is verie vncertaine , but the Bill is a more certaine marke, by reason of the breadth of the head, whereby as the Bill hath aduantage in his wardes in the head, so therefore hath the Staffe the like defence, or rather more, to play vpon the head of the Bill , not onely to make a perfect good ward, but thereby, the rather to cast the Bill out of the right line, whereby the Staffe-man may thrust safe, and endanger the Bill-man : and the rather because therein he is the first mouer, wherein there is great vantage, both in time and force. And if the Bill-man be not very skilfull (all vantages and disaduantages of both sides considered,) the short Staffe will proue the better weapon. Lastly note this, that long Staues, Morris Pikes, and such like weapons of imperfect lengthes, being to be vsed with both hands, notwithstanding their imperfect lengthes, are perfect weapons to be vsed, the one against the other , and their fightes therein perfect, because in drawing of them backe betwixt their handes, their motions are swifter backwardes, then is the time of the Agents feet forwardes, by the which all their lost times are redeemed : therefore these weapons in their fightes, the one against the other are perfect. And these weapons in the night are the best weapons of all other, and haue great aduantage against the forrest Bill , short Staffe, or anie maner of short weapons whatsoeuer : for these causes, they boldly make home their fightes , and if neede be against desperate men , that will venture themselues to run in, they redeeme their lost times. But the other with shorter weapons for lacke of light, can make no true defence. Thus endeth the vantages of weapons.

*Note this.*

*Questions and answers betweene the Scholler and the Maister, of the vantages and disadvantages betweene a tall man, and a man of meane stature, hauing both the perfect knowledge in their weapons.*

*Scholler.*

**W** Ho hath the aduantage in fight, of a tall 30 man, or a man of meane stature?

*Maister.*

The tall man hath the vantage, for these causes: his reach being longer, and weapon vnto his stature accordingly, he hath thereby a shorter course with his feet to win the true place, wherin by the swift motion of his hand, he may strike or thrust home: in the which time a man of meane stature cannot reach him, & by his large pace, in his true pace in his regression further, setteth himself out of all danger, & these are the vantages that a tall man hath against anie man of shorter reach then himselfe.

*Tall men haue the vantage against men of meane stature.*

*Scholler.*

What vantage hath a man of meane stature against a tall man?

*Maister.*

He hath none: because the true times in fight, and actions accordingly, are to be obserued and done, as well by a tall man, as by a man of meane stature.

*Scholler.*

Why then if this be true, that tall men haue the vantage against me of meane stature, it shold seme in fight

there is no perfection, other then this, when men of like stature, reach, & length of weapon, shall fight together, the which will seldome or neuer happen, but either in the length of their weapons, statures or reaches (if their swords should be of iust length) some difference most commonly there will be in their reaches.

*Maister.*

Yes verily, the tall man hath still the vantage, and yet the fight is perfect, although the men that shall happen to fight, shall happē to be vnequall in their statures, reaches, or lengths of their weapons.

*Scholler.*

That can I hardly belecue, vnlesse you can tell me by Art how to auoid or safely defend my selfe, being but a man of meane stature, against a tall man.

*Maister.*

I will tell you: there belongeth vnto this Art of defence onely to be vsed with the feet, progression, regression, trauerfing, and treading of grounds: in any of these you playing the part of the Patient, or Patient Agent, your feete are swifter in their motions then are the Agents, because his weight and number of his feet in his comming to win the true place to strike or thrust home, are greater then yours, and therefore the true time is yours to auoid him, or safely to defend your selfe: so the Art is still true, and the tall man hath still the vantage.

*Scholler.*

Yet I am not fully satisfied herein, because you tell me still that the tall man hath the vantage, and notwithstanding you say the Art is true, wherein then hath the tall man the vantage, when by your Art you can defend your selfe against him.

*Maister.*

*Maister.*

I will satisfie you therein thus. The tall man hath the vantage, he can maintaine his fight, both by nature and Art, with more ease then can the man of meane stature, because the man of meane stature hath thereby a further course with his feete to passe to the place, wherein he may strike or thrust home, and in winning of that place, is driuen by Art to come garded vnder his wards to defend himselfe, because in the time of his comming, the tall man may both naturally or artificially strike or thrust home, in the which time, if the mā of meane stature should faile in the least iote of his Art, he should be in great daunger of death or hurt. But the tall man can naturally and safely come to the true place open, without any artificiall wards at all, and therein also endanger the other, or driue him still to trauerse his ground, with all the artificiall skill that he hath to defend himselfe; and all this the tall man doth by reason of his length of weapon, large pace, short course, and long reach, with great safetie, pleasure and ease. And for those causes the tall man hath still the vantage of men of meane stature, and yet notwithstanding the noble Science of Defence most perfect and good.

*Foure invincible  
advantages consist  
in a tall man  
against a man  
of meane stature.  
Long reach.  
Short course.  
Length of weaph.  
Large pace.*


*Of the long single Rapier fight betweene valiant men, ha-  
ving both skill, he that is the best wrastler, or if nei-  
ther of them can wrastle, the strongest man  
most commonly killeth the other, or lea-  
ueth him at his mercie.*



When two valiant men of skill at single Ra- 31  
prier do fight, one or both of them most com-  
monly standing vpon their strength or skill  
in wrastling, will presently seeke to run into

the close ; but hauing both skill , not without speciall care of their gard or crosse, the which they may safely do, by reason of the length of their Rapiers: but hapning both of one mind , the rather do bring themselues together: that being done, noskil with Rapiers auaieth, they presently grapple fast their hilts , wrists, armes , bodies or neckes, as in lustring, wrastring, or striuing together, they may best find for their aduantages: wherby it most commonly falleth out, that he that is the best wrastring, or strongest man (if neither of them can wrastring) ouercommeth, wresting by strength , or fine skill in wrastring, the Rapier from his aduersarie , or casting him frō him, either to the ground, or to such distance, that he may by reason therof, vse the edge or point of his rapier, to strike or thrust him , leauing him dead or alieue at his mercie. But if but one of these valiant men shall seeke to run into the close , and that the other shall vse his skill in trauerfing of his ground , or otherwise by standing vpon his gard or *Stocata* ward , to take all maner of aduantages at his cōming, yet all auaieth him not, because the Rapiers being long, the crossing of the blades cannot be auoided: that being made , the oppressor runneth faster forwards then can the defendant backwards , and so are brought together, as in the first assault they were, & euerie action therein accordingly performed.

*Of the Rapier and Poiniard-fight betwixt valiant men, hauing both skill.*

32  F two valiant men do fight at Rapier and Poiniard hauing both skill, one or both of them will presently presse hard to winne the place, wherein in his iudgement he may thrust home. If both  
be

be of one mind , the time is doubled in winning the same : whereby it commeth to passe , that then he that first thrusteth, endangereth, killeth or hurteth the other: and if they both thrust together , as they may do by the equall time of their feet , then they are most commonly both slaine , or both hurt. And this is well knowne vnto all men of skill , that the place being once gotten, there is neither iudgement, space, pace, nor time, either by wards with their Rapier blades, or by breaking with their Poiniards, or flying backe , that can preferre or defend them . But if but one of them will seeke to win by passage, hard pressing, or otherwise the place, wherein in his iudgement he may thrust home , it is impossible for the other to denie him the same , because the length of the Rapiers winneth him the crosse; the crosse being taken, the place is had ; the place being had, he that first thrusteth, first speedeth : if both thrust together, they are both in danger: thē presently followeth (vnlesse it please God otherwise to haue it) the stabs with their daggers, wherein there lieth no defence.

*Of the long Rapier & Poiniard-fight betweene two valiant men, the one hauing skil, the other none: that he that hath no skill hath the vantage.*

**W**hen two valiant men shal fight with lōg 33  
Rapiers and Poiniards , the one hauing  
skill , and the other none, he that hath no  
skill most commōly proueth himself the  
better mā, for these causes or reasons fol-  
lowing. First the skilfull man as knowing the other to  
haue no skill , or finding it to be so by his shape or



*Paradoxes of Defence.*

5

Actions, by reason of the vncertainie & great swiftnesse in any of these times, they are in great danger of a blow, or of a thrust in the hand, arme, head, body, or face, & in euerie true crosse in the vncrossing, in great danger of a blow vpon the head, or a full thrust in the bodie or face: and being taken in that time & place, the first mouer in vncrossing speedeth the Rapier man of imperfect lēgth, whether it be too long, too short or too heauie, and goeth free himselfe by the direction of his gouernours.

The fourth marke is, the crosses of their Rapiers for true defence of their hands are imperfect, for the true cariage of the guardant fight, without the which all fights are imperfect.


*Of sixe chiefe causes, that many valiant men thinking themselves by their practises to be skilfull in their weapons, are yet manie times in their fight sore hurt, and manie times slaine by men of small skill, or none at all.*

**H**e first and chiefeest cause is, the lacke of the 3  
foure Gouernours, without the which it is  
impossible to fight safe, although a man  
should practise most painfully and most di-  
ligently all the daies of his life.

The second cause is, the lacke of knowledge in the due obseruance of the foure Actions, the which we cal bent, spent, lying spent, and drawing backe: these Actions euerie man fighteth vpon, whether they be skilfull or vn-skilfull, he that obserueth them is safe, he that obserueth thē not, is in cōtinuall danger of euerie thrust that shalbe strongly made against him.

maner of comming towardes him , will presently yeeld to take the aduantage of his comming , or else with all speed put himselfe into his short ward , to be readie at his comming to make out a strong *Stocata* (as the *Italians* call it:) the other knowing his imperfection in fight , assureth himselfe there can be no great good for him to stand long out at the point, presently redoubleth or reuiueth his spirits with perfect resolution , to make short worke, couragiously with some offensive action , such as nature shall best yeeld vnto him, slieth in with all force and agilitie : the skilfull man standeth watching to take such aduantages as his schoolemaister hath taught him , in the which time , manie times it falleth out, he is taught a new time, euen by an vnskilfull man that neuer fought before , is fore hurt or slaine : and if it happen they both misse in their offensive actions , then by reason thereof , and of the imperfect length of their Rapiers, they come to stabbing with their Poiniards, wherein there lyeth no defence , because distance being broken, iudgement faileth, time is lost, and their eies (by the swift motions of their handes) are deceiued.

*Of the long single Rapier, or Rapier and Poiniard-fight betweene two vnskilfull men being valiant.*

34  Hen two vnskilfull men ( being valiant ) shall fight with long single Rapiers , there is lesse danger in that kind of fight, by reason of their distance in conuenient length, waight, and vnweildinesse, then is with short Rapiers: whereby it commeth to passe, that what hurt shall happen to be done , if anie with the edge or point of their Rapiers

Rapiers is done in a moment, and presently will grapple and wrastle together, wherin most commonly the strongest or best Wrastler ouercommeth, and the like fight falleth out betweene them, at the long Rapier and Poiniard, but much more deadly, because in stead of Close and Wrastling, they fall most commonly to stabbing with their Poiniardes.

*Of the imperfection and insufficiencie of Rapiers in generall, of what length soeuer they be.*

**I**F two fight with long Rapiers, vpon euerie Croffe made within the halfe Rapier, if they haue Poiniardes, they most commonly stabbe each other, which cannot be auoided, because the Rapiers being long, the Croffe cannot be vndone of either side, without going backe with their feete, the which likewise in due time cannot be done, because the hand is more swifter then the feete, and the feete more swifter in their course forwardes then backwardes, neither can the Croffe be preuented, because the point of necessity lyeth too farre off in his offence, or else within compasse of the true time of the hand and bodie, by reason of his imperfect length: and so by the like reasons, if two fight with long single Rapiers, vpon euerie Croffe made therewith, within the halfe Rapier, the Close cannot be auoided, wherby it commeth to passe most commonly, that the strongest man or best Wrastler ouercommeth. Now if two do fight with short Rapiers, or Rapiers of conuenient length, such Rapiers be inconuenient and insufficient also for lacke of an hilt to defend the hand and head from the blow; for no eie (in making a

35

*If they stand vpon breaking with their Daggers, he that first winneth the place, and strueth home, hurteth the other for lacke of the circumference: if both thrust together, they are both sped, because their Spaces of Defence are too wide to answer the time of the hand, and by the swift motion thereof, the eye in that distance is by the same deccied. The feete in their course, but not in the first motion, alwaies note for the auoiding of great errors.*

perfect ward for the head, to defend a blow, can discern to take the same within three or foure inches, wherby it may as well and as often fall vpon the hand, as vpon the blade of the Rapier. Againe, the hilt as well serueth to defend the head as the hand, and is a more sure and strong ward, then is the blade of the Rapier. And further, vnderstand this for truth, that in gardant and open fight, the hand without an hilt lieth open to most blowes that shalbe stroken by the Agent, out of the gardant or open fight, because in the true cariage of the gardant fight, the hand must lie aboute the head, in such straightnes and narrownes of space, that which way soeuer the Agent shall strike or thrust at the head, face, or bodie, the remouing of two or foure inches shall faue all. And now somewhat more for the shortnesse or conuenient length of Rapiers.

Rapiers hauing no hilts to defend the head, the Rapier-man is driuen of necessitie to lie at the variable fight or low ward, and being there he can neither defend in due time, head, face, nor bodie from the blowes or thrustes of him, that shall fight out of the gardant or open fight, but is continually in great danger of the Agent, for these causes following. First, because his space is too wide to defend his head from blow or thrust. Secondly his Pace standing vpon that fight, wilbe of necessitie too great or too narrow: if too narrow, too weak: if too large, his weight and number of his feet, are too great to endanger him, that is vpon his gardant or open fight.

*of*

*Of the imperfection and insufficiencie of the fight of the  
single Rapier, Rapier and Poiniard, Ra-  
pier and Buckler, Rapier and  
Cloke, and Rapier and  
Gloue of maile.*

**T**He Rapier fight, whether it be single or ac- 36  
cōpanied with Poiniard, Buckler, cloke, or  
gloue of male, is still by reason of the insuf-  
ficiencie or imperfection of the Rapier, an  
imperfect fight: vnperfect instruments can make no  
perfect musicke, neither can vnperfect weapons make  
perfect fight: let the men that handle them haue  
all the knowledge that may be in all maner of weapons,  
yea the full height, or perfection, and true habite by his  
great labour and industry, euen as it were naturally effe-  
cted in him, yet if the weapons that they shall fight  
withall be imperfect or insufficient to performe what-  
soeuer appertaineth vnto true fight, as concerning the  
perfection of their safetie, it auaieth them nothing.  
What shall we then say for the Rapier? Is the Rapier  
an imperfect or insufficient weapon to perfourme  
whatsoeuer appertaineth vnto the true fight? Yea:  
Wherefore? Because vnto the true fight there apper-  
taineth foure fights, Gardant fight, Open fight, Varia-  
ble fight, and Close fight: without all foure of these  
fights it is impossible to fight safe: but the Rapier for  
lacke of an hilt is an vnperfect weapon, and therefore  
insufficient to fight safe vpon these foure fights, the  
reasons are alreadie set downe in the Paradoxe be-  
fore, but it is inferred to loose the benefit of two of the

best fights, gardant and open fight, and to flie from thē, and trust only vnto variable fight, and close fight. Now hauing proued through the imperfection or insufficiency of the Rapier, the imperfection of the Rapier fight, it remaineth that I speake of the rest of the weapons, or instruments appertaining vnto Rapier fight.

The Rapier and Poiniard fight, the Rapier & Buckler fight, the Rapier and cloke fight, & the Rapier & gloue of male fight: all these fights by reason of the imperfection of the Rapier, and Rapier fight, are all also imperfect fights: and for prooffe of the vncertaintie and impossibilities of safetie in any of these fights, thus it standeth. These fights depend altogether vpon variable fight and close fight: in anie of these fights it is impossible in true space of Offence to keepe the blades of their Rapiers from crossing, or frō breaking with the Poiniards, buckler, cloke, or breaking or catching with the gloue of male; because in anie of these two fights, the Agent hath still in true space the blade of the Patients Rapier to worke vpon. These things by letters cannot be made more plaine, neither is it vnknowne to the skilfull, or in fight by anie meanes to be auoided, the weapon being too farre in true space to be wrought vpon, the place cannot be denied, do the patient Agent what he can for his life to the contrarie, either by blowes, thrusts, faling, or doubling of thrusts, going backe, indirections, or turnings of the body, or what else soeuer may in the highest touch of wit or strength, or agilitie of bodie be deuised or done, to keepe out the Agent: but still the Agent by narrowesse of space bringeth himself by strōg gard to the place, where being brought, it is as impossible to fight safe, as it is for two desperate men set together

ther being both blind; because in the true place (wonne in Rapier or variable fight) their eyes by the swift motions of their hands are deceiued, the crosses in that fight are false, their distance, iudgements and times are lost, either to offend in safetie, or safely to defend themselves: and these reasons, rules, or grounds of the feates of armes are infallible and inuincible.

Now, ô you Italian teachers of Defence, where are your *Stocatas*, *Imbrocatas*, *Mandritas*, *Puntas*, & *Puynta reuerfas*, *Stramijons*, *Passatas*, *Carricados*, *Amazzas*, & *Incartatas*, & playing with your bodies, remouing with your feet a litle aside, circle wise winding of your bodies, making of three times with your feet together, marking with one eye the motion of the aduersary, & with the other eye the aduantage of thrusting? What is become of all these iugling gambalds, Apish deuises, with all the rest of your squint-eyed trickes, when as through your deepe studies, long practises, & apt bodies, both strong & agillious, you haue attained to the height of all these things? What then auaieth it you, when you shal come to fight for your liues with a man of skill? you shall haue neither time, nor place, in due time to performe any one of them, nor gardant nor open fight safely to keep out a man of skill, a man of no skill, or scholler of your owne teaching, from the true place, the place of safetie, the place of vncertaintie or mischief, the place of wounds or death, but are there inforced to stand in that mischieuous, vncertaine, dangerous, and most deadly place, as two men hauing lost in part their chiefest fences, most furiously with their rapiers or poiniards, wounding or slaying each other.

Thus endeth the imperfect fights of the rapier with

all maner of weapons or instruments thereto ap pertaining, with their imperfections, through the true grounds and rules of the Art of armes, truly displayed & brought to light.

*All laud be vnto the Almighty God.*

*That the reasons vsed by the Italian Fencers in commending the vse of the Rapier and Poiniard, because it maketh peace, maketh against themselues.*

37



*There are few frayes, but more valiant Gentlem<sup>n</sup> slaine now then were then.*

**T** hath bin commonly held, that since the Italians haue taught the Rapier fight, by reason of the dangerous vse therof, it hath bred great ciuilitie amongst our English nation, they will not now giue the lye, nor with such foule speeches abuse themselues, therefore there are fewer frayes in these times then were wont to be: it cannot be denied but this is true, that we are more circumspect of our words, and more fearefull to fight, then heretofore we haue bene. But whereof commeth it? Is it from this, that the Rapier maketh peace in our minds; or from hence, that it is not so sufficient defence for our bodies in our fight? He that will fight when he is armed, will not fight when he is naked: is it therefore good to go naked to keepe peace? he that would fight with his Sword and Buckler, or Sword and Dagger, being weapons of true defence, will not fight with his Rapier and Poiniard, wherein no true defence or fight is perfect: are these insufficiēt weapōs therfore the better, because not being sufficiēt to defend vs in fight, they force vs vnto peace? What else is it, but to say, it is good for subiects



subiects to be poore, that they may not go to law: or to lacke munition, that they may not fight, nor go to the warres: and to conclude, what more followeth through the imperfect workes of these *Italian* peacemakers? They haue made many a strong man in his fight weake, many a valiant man fearefull, manie a worthie man trusting to their imperfect fight, hath bene slaine, and manie of our desperate boyes and young youthes, to become in that Rapier-fight, as good men as *England* yeeldeth, and the tallest men in this land, in that fight as verie boyes as they and no better. This good haue the *Italian* teachers of Offence done vs, they haue transformed our boyes into men, and our men into boyes, our strong men into weakenesse, our valiant men doubtfull, and manie worthie men resoluing themselues vpon their false resolutions, haue most wilfully in the field, with their Rapiers ended their liues. And lastly, haue left to remaine amongst vs after their deathes, these inconueniences behind them, false Fence-bookes, imperfect weapons, false fightes, and euill customes, whereby for lacke of vse and practise in perfect weapons and true fight, we are disabled for the seruice of our Prince, defence of our countrey, and safetie of our liues in priuate fight.

*That the short Sword hath the aduantage against  
the long Sword or long Rapier.*



Hereas for the most part opinions are 38  
generally holden, that the long Sword,  
or long Rapier, hath the vantage in fight  
against the short Sword, which the *Itali-*  
*an* teachers of Defence, by their false de-

monstratiōs haue brought vs to beleecue. I haue thought good that the truth may appeare which hath the vantage, to adde my helpe vnto the reasons they vse in their owne behalfe, for that yet I could neuer heare them make a sound reason for the same. These are the reasons. First with my long Rapier, I will put my selfe into my gard or *Stocata*, holding my hilt backe by the outside of my right thigh, keeping in short the point of my Rapier, so as he that hath the short Sword, shall not be able to reach the point of my Rapier, to make his ward or Crosse with his Dagger, Buckler, Sword, or Cloke, without stepping in of his foote, the which time is too long to answere the time of the hand, by reason of my distance. I can there stand safe without danger of blow or thrust, playing the Patients part: if you strike or thrust you do it too short, by reason of my distance: if you seek to come nearer, you must do it with the time of your foote, in the which time I may safely thrust home: if in that distance you breake it not, you are slaine: if you do breake it, yet you do me no harme, by reason of my distance, and I may stand fast and thrust againe, or flie backe at my pleasure: so haue you put your selfe in danger of your life, and hauing hardly escaped, are driuen againe to begin a new bought, as at the first you did. Againe, if I please, I can be the oppressour, keeping the same gard, and my point in short as I did before, and pressing strongly by putting in by litle and litle of my feete, vntill the place with my foote be gotten, wherein (in my iudgement) I may thrust home, the which I may boldly and safely do, without respect of anie ward at all, by reason of my distance, in which time of my comming he must strike, thrust, ward, or go backe: if he go backe,  
it

*These reasons  
are vsed by the  
Italians.*

it is a great disgrace: if he strike or thrust, it is too short: if he stand to defend, the place being already gotten, where I may thrust home, the thrust being verie quicke & strongly made, such is the force and swiftnesse thereof, that it is impossible by nature or art, for anie man to breake one thrust of an hundred. These reasons in my opinion may suffice to confirme the wise, that there is no question to be made, but that the long Rapier hath the aduantage against the short Sword.

Sir you haue pretily handled your discourse, concerning the vantages of the long Rapier against the short Sword, especially at the first shew, and according to common sence, but for the substance and truth of the true fight, you haue said nothing, because for the performance of anie of your allegations, you haue neither true Pace, Place, Time, nor Space: these are the reasons. Your Pace of necessitie must be too large, because otherwise you cannot keepe safe the point of your long Rapier, from the Crosse of the short Sword, vnlesse you will with a narrow Pace keepe backe your hilt so farre, that the space of your offence wilbe too large or too long in distance, and your bodie vnapt to moue and to thrust both strong and quicke in due time, nor aptly to keepe your distance, to win the place with your feete, to thrust home. So now you may plainely see, if you haue skill in the art or science of Defence, that to performe anie thing which you haue alleaged, you haue neither true Pace, Place, time nor Space. But if you will stand vpon the largeness of your Pace, to keepe backe or saue the point of your long Rapier from the ward or Crosse of the short Sword, or vpon your *Passatos*, in all these you haue great disadvantages: and

*A confutation of  
the Italians rea-  
sons.*

The third cause is, they are vnpractised in the foure true times, neither do they know the true times frō the false: therefore the true choise of their times are most commonly taken by chance, and seldome otherwise.

The fourth cause is, they are vnacquainted out of what fight, or in what maner they are to answer the variable fight: and therefore because the variable fight is the most easiest fight of all other, most cōmonly do answer the variable fight with the variable fight, which ought neuer to be but in the first distance, or with the short Sword against the long, because if both or one of them shall happen to prese, and that in due time of neither side fight be changed, the distance, by reason of narrownesse of space, is broken, the place is won and lost of both sides, then he that thrusteth first, speedeth: if both happen to thrust together, they are both in dāger. These things sometimes by true times, by change of fights, by chance are auoided.

The fift cause is, their weapons are most commonly too long to vncrosse without going backe with the feet.

The sixt cause is, their weapons are most commonly too heauie both to defend and offend in due time, & by these two last causes many valiāt mē haue lost their liues.

*What is the cause that wise men in learning or practising their weapons, are deceived with Italian Fencers.*

*No fight perfect  
that is not done in  
force & true  
time.*

There are foure causes: the first, their schoolmaisters are imperfect: the second is, that whatsoeuer they teach, is both true & false; true in their demōstrations, according with their force & time in gētle play, & in their actions

these are my reasons: Your number will be too great, as thus: whensoever you meane out of your large pace to thrust home, you must of necessitie make foure times with your feet, and one with your hand, or two times with your feet, and one with your hand at the least: and whensoever you make any of your passages, the nūber of your feet are greater then the greatest of any of these times done out of the large pace: but the patient with his short sword, to auoyd you, or disappoint you of your thrust, hath but one time with his foot, at or before the which time, as he in his iudgemēt shall find you in your motion, hath by the slow and great number of your motions or times, sufficient time safely out of all danger to make himselfe readie to take his crosse with his short sword. Now Sir, whether you thrust or not thrust, whether you play the part of an Agent, or Patient, it helpeth you nothing, for he that hath the short sword hath foure times or motions against the long Rapier, namely, bent, spent, lying spent, and drawing backe, in all maner of fights these are to be obserued both by the Patient and Agent. Now note, he that hath the long Rapier must of necessitie play vpon one of these foure motions, or be Patient, which soeuer he shall do, he is still in great danger of the crosse of the short sword, because if he be Agent, his number is too great, he falleth into one of the foure motions, the Patient with his short sword, hauing but the time of the hand, or hād & foot, safely vpon these actions or times taketh his crosse with the short Sword: that being done, he presently vncrosseth and striketh or thrusteth at his pleasure him that hath the long Rapier, in the head, face, or bodie. Now here is againe to be noted, that when the crosse

is made, if he that hath the long Rapier stand fast, he is wounded presently in the vncrossing of the short sword, if he step or leape backe to saue himselfe, yet the time of the hand being swifter then the time of the foot, ouertaketh him, with blow or thrust in the arme, hand, head, face and bodie. Now if he that hath the long Rapier will be patient & make no play, but lie still watching to make his thrust or *Stocata* iust in the comming or mouing of the Agents feete with his short sword, then he hath as great disaduantage as he had when he was Patient, because thē the Agent with his short Sword hath but hand and foot to make his crosse: which is most safely to be done in that time, which we call Bent, and is as impossible for the Rapier-man to preuent, as it is for an vnskilfull to strike or thrust iust together with a man of skill. Then thus I conclude, that he that fighteth with a long Rapier, against him that fighteth with a short Sword, can do nothing in due time to defend himselfe, or hurt the other, but is still in daunger of his life, or at the mercie of him that hath the short Sword, or else hath no safe way to helpe himselfe, but onely *Cobs* *Cobs Trauerse*. *Trauerse*. This *Cob* was a great quareller, and did delight in great brauerie to giue foule words to his betters, and would not refuse to go into the field to fight with any man, and when he came into the field, would draw his Sword to fight, for he was sure by the cunning of his *Trauerse*, not to be hurt by anie man: for at anie time finding himselfe ouermatched would suddenly turne his backe and runne away with such swiftnesse, that it was thought a good horse would scarce take him. And this when I was a young man, was verie much spoken of by many Gentlemen of the Innes of

the Court, and was called *Cobs Trauerse* and those that had seene anie go backe too fast in his fight, would say, he did tread *Cobs Trauerse*.

*George Siluer his militarie riddle, truly set downe betweene the Perfection and Imperfection of fight: containing the handling of the foure fights: wherein true consisteth the whole summe and full perfection of the true fight, with all maner of weapons, with an inuincible conclusion.*



**A**rdant fight stayeth, putteth backe, or beateth gardant fight.

Open fight stayeth, putteth backe, or beateth open fight.

Variable fight answereth variable fight in the first distance, and not otherwise, except it be with the perfect length against the imperfect.

Close fight is beaten by gardant fight.

Variable close & gardant fight, beateth gardant fight, open fight, variable fight, and close fight.

Gardant fight in the imperfection of the Agent or Patient, winneth the halfe sword, and preuenteth the close, and whosoeuer first ventureth the close, loofeth it, and is in great danger of death, and not possible to escape or get out againe without great hurt.

There attendeth most diligently vpon these foure fights foure offensue actions, which we call certaine, vncertaine, first, before, iust, and afterwards: they are to be performed through iudgement, time, measure, number and waight, by which all maner of blowes, thrusts,

thrusts, falses, doubles, or slips, are prevented, or most safely defended. And thus endeth my riddle.

Now followeth the conclusion, that whosoever shall thinke or find himselfe in his fight too weake for the Agent, or Patient Agent, and therefore, or by reason of his drunkenesse, or vnreasonable desperatenesse shall prese within the halfe Sword, or deserately runne in of purpose to giue hurt, or at least for taking of one hurt, to giue another, shall most assuredly be in great danger of death or wounds, and the other shall still be safe and go free.

*Veritas vincit.*





A BRIEFE NOTE OF THREE ITALIAN Teachers of Offence.

*I write not this to disgrace the dead, but to shew their impudēt boldnesse and insufficiency in performance of their profession when they were living: that from henceforth this briefe note may be a remembrance and warning to beware of had I wist.*



Here were three Italian Teachers of Offence in my time. The first was *Signior Rocko*: the second was *Ieronimo*, that was *Signior Rocko* his boy, that taught Gentlemen in the *Blacke-Fryers*, as *Vsher* for his maister in steed of a man. The third was *Vincentio*. This *Signior Rocko* came into *England* about some thirtie yeares past: he taught the Noblemen & Gentlemen of the Court; he caused some of them to weare leaden soales in their shoes, the better to bring them to nimblenesse of feet in their fight. He disbursed a great summe of mony for the lease of a faire house in *Warwicke lane*, which he called his Colledge, for he thought it great disgrace for him to keepe a Fence-schoole, he being then thought to be the onely famous Maister of the Art of armes in the whole world. He caused to be fairely drawne and set round about his Schoole all the Noblemens and Gentlemens armes that were his Schollers, and hanging right vnder their armes their Rapiers, daggers, gloues of male and gantlets. Also, he had benches and stooles, the roome being verie large, for Gentlemē to sit round about his Schoole to behold his teaching. He taught none commonly vnder twentie, fortie, fifty, or an hundred pounds. And because all things should be verie necessary for the Noblemē & gentlemē, he had  
in

in his schoole a large square table, with a greene carpet, done round with a verie brode rich fringe of gold, alwaies standing vpon it a verie faire Standish covered with Crimson Veluet, with inke, pens, pin-dust, and sealing waxe, and quiuers of verie excellent fine paper gilded, readie for the Noblemen & Gentlemen (vpon occasion) to write their letters, being then desirous to follow their fight, to send their men to dispatch their businesse. And to know how the time passed, he had in one corner of his schoole a Clocke, with a verie faire large Diall, he had within that schoole, a roome the which was called his priuie schoole, with manie weapons therein, where he did teach his schollers his secret fight, after he had perfectly taught them their rules. He was verie much beloued in the Court.

There was one *Austen Bagger*, a verie tall gentleman of his handes, not standing much vpon his skill, but carying the valiant hart of an Englishman, vpon a time being merrie amongst his friendes, said he would go fight with *Signior Rocco*, presently went to *Signior Rocco* his house in the *Blackefriers*, and called to him in this maner: *Signior Rocco*, thou that art thought to be the onely cunning man in the world with thy weapon, thou that takest vpon thee to hit anie Englishman with a thrust vpon anie button, thou that takest vpon thee to come ouer the seas, to teach the valiant Noblemen and Gentlemen of *England* to fight, thou cowardly fellow come out of thy house if thou dare for thy life, I am come to fight with thee. *Signior Rocco* looking out at a window, perceiuing him in the street to stand readie with his Sword and Buckler, with his two hand Sword drawne, with all speed ran into the street, and manfully

let flie at *Austen Bagger*, who most brauely defended himselfe, and presently closed with him, and stroke vp his heeles, and cut him ouer the breech, and trode vpon him, and most grieuouly hurt him vnder his feet: yet in the end *Austen* of his good nature gaue him his life, and there left hin. This was the first and last fight that euer *Signior Rocco* made, sauing once at *Queene Hith* he drew his Rapier vpon a waterman, where he was throughly beaten with Oares and Stretchers, but the oddes of their weapons were as great against his Rapier, as was his two hand Sword against *Austen Baggers* Sword and Buckler, therefore for that fray he was to be excused.

Then came in *Vincentio* and *Ieronimo*, they taught Rapier-fight at the Court, at *London*, and in the countrey, by the space of seauen or eight yeares or thereabouts. These two *Italian* Fencers, especially *Vincentio*, said that Englishmen were strong men, but had no cunning, and they would go backe too much in their fight, which was great disgrace vnto them. Vpon these words of disgrace against Englishmen, my brother *Toby Siluer* and my selfe, made challenge against them both, to play with them at the single Rapier, Rapier and Dagger, the single Dagger, the single Sword, the Sword and Target, the Sword and Buckler, & two hand Sword, the Staffe, battell Axe, and Morris Pike, to be played at the Bell Sauage vpon the Scaffold, where he that went in his fight faster backe then he ought, of Englishman or Italian, shold be in danger to breake his necke off the Scaffold. We caused to that effect, fise or sixe score Bills of challenge to be printed, and set vp from *Southwarke* to the Tower, and from thence through *London* vnto *Westminster*,

*minster*, we were at the place with all these weapons at the time appointed, within a bow shot of their Fence schoole: many gentlemen of good accompt, caried manie of the bills of challenge vnto them, telling them that now the *Siluers* were at the place appointed, with all their weapons, looking for them, and a multitude of people there to behold the fight, saying vnto them, now come and go with vs (you shall take no wrong) or else you are shamed for euer. Do the gentlemen what they could, these gallants would not come to the place of triall. I verily thinke their cowardly feare to answere this challenge, had vtterly shamed them indeed, had not the maisters of Defence of *London*, within two or three daies after, bene drinking of bottell Ale hard by *Vincentios* schoole, in a Hall where the *Italians* must of necessitie passe through to go to their schoole: and as they were comming by, the maisters of Defence did pray them to drinke with them, but the *Italians* being verie cowardly, were afraide, and presently drew their Rapiers: there was a pretie wench standing by, that loued the *Italians*, she ran with ourcrie into the street, helpe, helpe, the *Italians* are like to be slaine: the people with all speede came running into the house, and with their Cappes and such things as they could get, parted the fraic, for the English maisters of Defence, meant nothing lesse then to foile their hands vpon these two faint-hearted fellowes. The next morning after, all the Court was filled, that the *Italian* teachers of Fence had beaten all the maisters of Defence in *London*, who set vpon them in a house together. This wan the *Italian* Fencers their credit againe, and thereby got much, still continuing their false teaching to the end of their liues.

This *Vincentio* proued himfelfe a stout man not long before he died, that it might be feene in his life. time he had bene a gallant, and therefore no maruaile he tooke vpon him fo highly to teach Englifhmen to fight, and to fet forth bookes of the feates of Armes. Vpon a time at *Wels* in Somersfetshire, as he was in great brauerie amongft manie gentlemen of good accompt, with great boldnesse he gaue out speeches, that he had bene thus manie yeares in *England*, and fince the time of his first comming, there was not yet one Englifhman, that could once touch him at the fingle Rapier, or Rapier and Dagger. A valiant gentleman being there amongft the reft, his Englifh hart did rife to heare this proude boafter, secretly sent a messenger to one *Bartholomew Bramble* a friend of his, a verie tall man both of his hands and perfon, who kept a fchoole of Defence in the towne, the messenger by the way made the maifter of Defence acquainted with the mind of the gentleman that sent for him, and of all what *Vincentio* had faid, this maifter of Defence presently came, and amongft all the gentlemen with his cap off, prayed maifter *Vincentio*, that he would be pleased to take a quart of wine of him. *Vincentio* verie fcornefully looking vpon him, faid vnto him. Wherefore fhould you giue me a quart of wine? Marie Sir, faid he, becaufe I heare you are a famous man at your weapon. Then presently faid the gentleman that sent for the maifter of Defence: Maifter *Vincentio*, I pray you bid him welcome, he is a man of your profefion. My profefion faid *Vincentio*? what is my profefion. Then faid the gentleman, he is a maifter of the noble science of Defence. Why faid maifter *Vincetio*, God make him a good man. But the maifter of Defence wold not

not thus leaue him, but prayed him againe he would be pleased to take a quart of wine of him. Thē said *Vincētio*, I haue no need of thy wine. Then said the maister of Defence: Sir I haue a schoole of Defence in the towne, will it please you to go thither. Thy schoole, said maister *Vincentio*? what shall I do at thy schoole? play with me (said the maister) at the Rapier and Dagger, if it please you. Play with thee said maister *Vincentio*? if I play with thee, I will hit thee 1. 2. 3. 4. thrustes in the cie together. Then said the maister of Defence, if you can do so, it is the better for you, and the worse for me, but surely I can hardly belecue that you can hit me: but yet once againe I hartily pray you good Sir, that you will go to my schoole, and play with me. Play with thee said maister *Vincentio* (verie scornefully?) by God me scorne to play with thee. With that word scorne, the maister of Defence was verie much moued, and vp with his great English fist, and stroke maister *Vincentio* such a boxe on the eare that he fell ouer and ouer, his legges iust against a Butterie hatch, whereon stood a great blacke lacke: the maister of Defence fearing the worst, against *Vincentio* his rising, catcht the blacke lacke into his hand, being more then halfe full of Beere. *Vincentio* lustily start vp, laying his hand vpon his Dagger, & with the other hand pointed with his finger, saying, very well: I will cause to lie in the Gaile for this geare, 1. 2. 3. 4. yeares. And well said the maister of Defence, since you will drinke no wine, will you pledge me in Beere? I drinke to all the cowardly knaues in *England*, and I thinke thee to be the veriest coward of them all: with that he cast all the Beere vpon him: notwithstanding *Vincentio* hauing nothing but his guilt Rapier, and

actions according with true force & time in rough play or fight, false: for exāple, there is as much difference betwixt these two kind of fights, as there is betwixt the true picture of Sir *Beuis* of *Southampton*, & Sir *Beuis* himself, if he were liuing. The third, none cā iudge of the Craft but the Crafts-man; the vnskilfull, be he neuer so wise, can not truly iudge of his teacher, or skill, the which he learneth, being vnskilful himselfe. Lastly, & to confirme for truth all that shal be amisse, not only in this excellēt Science of Defence, but in all other excellent secrets, most commonly the lye beareth as good a shew of truth, as truth it selfe.

*Of the false resolutions and vaine opinions of Rapier-men, and of the danger of death thereby ensuing.*

**I**T is a great question, & especially amōgst 4  
the Rapier-men, who hath the vantage of  
the thruster, or of the warder. Some hold  
strongly, that the warder hath the vantage:  
others say, it is most certain that the thruster  
hath the vantage. Now when two do happē to fight,  
being both of one mind, that the thruster hath the vantage,  
they make all shift they can, who shall giue the first  
thrust: as for example, two Captaines at *Southampton* euen  
as they were going to take shipping vpon the key, fel  
at strife, drew their Rapiers, and presently, being desperate,  
hardie or resolute, as they call it, with all force and  
ouer great speed, ran with their rapiers one at the other,  
& were both slaine. Now when two of the contrary  
opinion shall meet and fight, you shall see verie peaceable  
warres betweene them: for they verily thinke that he

Dagger about him, and the other for his defence the blacke Iacke, would not at that time fight it out : but the next day met with the maister of Defence in the streete, and said vnto him, you remember how misused a me yesterday, you were to blame, me be an excellent man, me teach you how to thrust two foote further then anie Englishman, but first come you with me: then he brought him to a Mercers shop, and said to the Mercer, let me see of your best silken Pointes, the Mercer did presently shew him some of seauen groates a dozen, then he payeth fourteene groates for two dozen, and said to the maister of Defence, there is one dozen for you, and here is another for me. This was one of the valiantest Fencers that came from beyond the seas, to teach Englishmen to fight, and this was one of the manliest frays, that I haue hard of, that euer he made in *England*, wherein he shewed himselfe a farre better man in his life, then in his profession he was, for he professed armes, but in his life a better Christian. He set forth in print a booke for the vse of the Rapier and Dagger, the which he called his practise, I haue read it ouer, and because I finde therein neither true rule for the perfect teaching of true fight, not true ground of true fight, neither sence or reason for due prooff thereof. I haue thought it friuolous to recite any part therin contained: yet that the truth hereof may appeare, let two mē being wel experienced in the Rapier and Dagger fight, choosē any of the best branches in the same booke, & make trial with force and agility, without the which the truth betweene the true & false fight cannot be knowne, & they shall find great imperfections therein. And againe, for prooff that there is no truth, neither in his rules, grounds  
or



or Rapier-fight, let triall be made in this maner: Set two vnskilfull men together at the Rapier and Dagger, being valiant, and you shall see, that once in two bouts there shall either one or both of them be hurt. Then set two skilfull men together, being valiant at the Rapier and Dagger, and they shall do the like. Then set a skilful Rapier and Dagger-man the best that can be had, and a valiant man hauing no skill together at Rapier & Dagger, and once in two bouts vpon my credit in all the experience I haue in fight, the vnskilful man, do the other what he can for his life to the contrarie, shall hurt him, and most commonly if it were in continuance of fight, you shall see the vnskilfull man to haue the aduantage. And if I should chuse a valiant man for seruice of the Prince, or to take part with me or anie friend of mine in a good quarrell, I would chuse the vnskilfull man, being vnencombred with false fights, because such a man standeth free in his valour with strength and agilitie of bodie, freely taketh the benefit of nature, fighteth most braue, by loosing no oportunitie, either soundly to hurt his enemie, or defend himselfe, but the other standing for his Defence, vpon his cunning Italian wardes, *Poin-ta reuerfa*, the *Imbrocata*, *Stocata*, and being fast tyed vnto these false fightes, standeth troubled in his wits, and nature therby racked through the largeness or false lyings or Spaces, whereby he is in his fight as a man halfe maimed, loosing the oportunitie of times & benefit of nature, & whereas before being ignorant of these false Rapier fightes, standing in the free libertie of nature giuen him by god, he was able in the field with his weapo to answere the valiantest man in the world, but now being tied vnto that false fickle vncertaine fight, there-

by hath lost in nature his freedome, is now become scarce halfe a man, and euerie boye in that fight is become as good a man as himselfe.

*Ieronimo* this gallant was valiant, and would fight indeed, and did, as you shall heare. He being in a Coch with a wench that he loued well, there was one *Cheefe*, a verie tall man, in his fight naturall English, for he fought with his Sword and Dagger, and in Rapier-fight had no skill at all. This *Cheefe* hauing a quarrell to *Ieronimo*, ouertooke him vpon the way, himselfe being on horsebacke, did call to *Ieronimo*, and bad him come forth of the Coch or he would fetch him, for he was come to fight with him. *Ieronimo* presently went forth of the Coch and drew his Rapier and dagger, put himself into his best ward or *Stocata*, which ward was taught by himselfe and *Vincentio*, and by them best allowed of, to be the best ward to stand vpon in fight for life, either to assault the enemie, or stand and watch his comming, which ward it should seeme he ventured his life vpon, but howsoeuer with all the fine Italianated skill *Ieronimo* had, *Cheefe* with his Sword within two thrustes ran him into the bodie and slue him. Yet the Italian teachers will say, that an Englishmā cannot thrust straight with a Sword, because the hilt will not suffer him to put the forefinger ouer the Crosse, nor to put the thumbe vpon the blade, nor to hold the pummell in the hand, whereby we are of necessitie to hold fast the handle in the hand: by reason whereof we are driuen to thrust both compasse and short, whereas with the Rapier they can thrust both straight and much further then we can with the Sword, because of the hilt: and these be the reasons they make against the Sword.

FINIS.

that first thrusteth is in great danger of his life, therefore with all speede do put themselues in ward, or *Stocata*, the surest gard of all other, as *Vincentio* saith, and therevpon they stand sure, saying the one to the other, thrust and thou dare; and saith the other, thrust and thou dare, or strike or thrust and thou dare, saith the other: then saith the other, strike or thrust and thou dare for thy life. These two cunning gentlemen standing long time together, vpon this worthie ward, they both depart in peace, according to the old prouerbe: It is good sleeping in a whole skinne. Againe if two shall fight, the one of opinion, that he that thrusteth hath the vantage, and the other of opinion, that the warder hath the vantage, then most commonly the thruster being valiant, with all speed thrusteth home, and by reason of the time and swift motion of his hand, they are most commonly with the points of their rapiers, or daggers, or both, one or both of them hurt or slaine; because their spaces of defence in that kind of fight, are too wide in due time to defend, and the place being wonne, the eye of the Patient by the swift motion of the Agents hand, is deceiued. Another resolution they stand sure vpon for their liues, to kill their enemies, in the which they are most commonly slaine themselues: that is this: When they find the point of their enemies rapier out of the right line, they say, they may boldly make home a thrust with a *Passata*, the which they obserue, and do accordingly: but the other hauing a shorter time with his hand, as nature manie times teacheth him, sodainly turneth his wrist, whereby he meeteth the other in his passage iust with the point of his rapier in the face or body. And this false resolution hath cost manie a life.

*That*

*That the cause that manie are so often slaine, and manie  
sore hurt in fight with long Rapiers is not by reason of  
their dangerous thrusts, nor cunningnesse of that  
Italianated fight, but in the length and  
vnweildinesse thereof.*



**T**is most certaine, that men may with 5  
short swords both strike, thrust, false and  
double, by reason of their distance and  
nimblenesse thereof, more dangerously  
then they can with long Rapiers: and yet  
when two fight with short swordes, hauing true fight,  
there is no hurt done: neither is it possible in anie reason,  
that anie hurt should be done betwixt them of either  
side, and this is well knowne to all such as haue the per-  
fection of true fight. By this it plainly appeareth, that  
the cause of the great slaughter, and sundrie hurts done  
by long Rapiers, consisteth not in long Reach, dange-  
rous thrustes, nor cunningnesse of the Italian fight, but  
in the inconuenient length, and vnweildinesse of their  
long Rapiers: whereby it commonly falleth out, that in  
all their Actions appertaining to their defence, they are  
vnable, in due time to performe, and continually in dan-  
ger of euerie crosse, that shall happen to be made with  
their rapier blades, which being done, within the halfe  
rapier; (vnlesse both be of one mind with all speed to de-  
part, which seldome or neuer happneth betweene men  
of valiant disposition,) it is impossible to vncrosse, or get  
out, or to auoid the stabbes of the Daggers. And this  
hath falne out manie times amongst valiant men at  
those weapons.