

SAVIOLO – HIS PRACTISE.

It was established by the Milan professor Sergio Rossi some years ago that John Florio wrote this manual for his friend Saviolo. In ‘Second Fruits’, Florio speaks of his friend and talks of going for fencing lessons, describing the man as “he that looketh like Mars himself.” He even gives Saviolo’s trading address, a advertisement for his friend’s business. Rossi analyzed the text and pronounced that Florio must have written it. It is known Saviolo spoke poor English and certainly did not have sufficient command to write this book on his own. The style and language are pure Florio, and offer another chance to see connections to Shakespeare. Rossi went on to point out that the rules of the duel in Verona, an appendix to this book, are followed in ‘Romeo and Juliet’. When Tybalt issues the challenge ‘Will you walk’ – he means to the fencing grounds outside the city, where duels were banned. Saviolo warns against intervening in a duel, pointing out that the distraction could lead to a fatal blow, as it does in ‘Romeo and Juliet’. Fencing in the Italian manner was a great fashion in the 1590s, every young man about town wanted to learn this glamorous new art. The players at the theatres had to master the technique too if they wanted to put on a spectacular show for the audience. Richard Tarlton was also a qualified fencing master and may have taught occasionally at Saviolo’s school, where large numbers of pupils demanded regular use of extra tutors.

What follows is the first book of Saviolo’s manual, so you can see for yourself the similarities between this and Florio’s language books to form your own conclusion.

Giulia Harding.

To the Right Honorable my singular good lord, *Robert Earle of Essex and Ewe, Viscount Hereford, Lord Ferrers of Chartley, Bourghchier and Louain, Master of the Queenes Majseties horse, Knight of the most noble order of the Garter, and one of her Highnesse most honorable Privie Councill.*

Having of late, (right Honorable) compiled this simple Discourse, of managing weapons, and dealing in honorable Quarrels (which I esteem an Introduction to Martiall affayres) I have thought good to dedicate the same unto your Honor, as

unto him whose bountie most bindeth me: whose valour inforceth all soldiers to acknowledge you the English *Achilles*: whose favouring good literature celebrateth your name for the students Mecnas: whose benigne potection and provision for strangers, maketh you reported off as theyr safe sanctuary. This work, I must needs confesse, is farre unworthie your Lordships view, in regard eyther of method or substance: and being much unperfector than it shoulde have beene, if I had had copie of English to have expressed my meaning as I would. But I humbly beseech your good Lordship to accept this Booke, howsoever it be, as a new yeeres gifte proceeding from a minde most dutifully affected towards you, that wisheth and prayeth, that your Honour may enjoy many good and prosperous yeres: and it is presented by him that is and will be readie everie yere, daie, and houre to live and die at your Lordships foot to do you service.

Your Honors in all dutifulnes,

Vincentio Saviolo.

The meanes whereby men from time to time have bene preferred even to the highest degrees of greatnes and dignitie, have ever bene and are of two sortes, Armes and Letters: weapons & bookes, as may most plainly bee proved out of antique and moderne histories. Let it not seeme strange unto anie man that I have placed Armes before Letters, for in truth I have found by observing the course of times, and by comparing the occurrents of former ages with those which have fallen out and followed (as it were by succession) in later yeeres, that the first Princes and patrones of people did obtaine their titles and dominions by force of Armes, and that afterwards learning & vertue did (as it were by degrees) grow and succede for the making and establishing of good orders, customes, and lawes amongst them. And then did common-wealths begin first to flourish, when their Princes were like *Minerva*, whom the Poets fained to bee the goddesse not onely of studies but also of Armes, inspiring wit into schollers, and favoring those that follow warres. Wherefore knowing that such men as endeavour themselves to attaine unto the excellencie of anie art or science, are worthie both of praise and preferment, because they seeke for that onely true nobilitie, which is in deede much more to be accounted of than birth and parentage. I have beene induced (for the satisfaction of such, and other like noble spirites, desirous to imploie either their studies in the profession, or their lives in the practise of the arte militarie) to bestowe my paines in the writing of this Treatise concerning the Art, exercise, and manneging of the Rapier and Dagger, together with the ordering and moving of the bodie in those actions: A thing I confesse in shewe the least peece and practise (as a man might saie) of

the arte Militarie, but in verie deed to most important, excellent, and noble practice thereof. For when I consider with my selfe how some Authors doo write, that hunting, hauking, wrastling, &c. are things in some sort belonging unto Militarie profession, for that men thereby doo both make their bodies strong and active, and also learne to make the scituation of hils, woods, lakes, and vallies, together with the crooked and turning courses of rivers. It seemeth unto mee that I may with farre greater reason saie that the Arte and exercise of the Rapier and Dagger is much more rare and excellent than anie other Militarie exercise of the bodie, because there is very great and necessarie use thereof, not onely in generall warres, but also in particular combats, & many other accidents, where a man having the perfect knowledge and practise of this arte, although but small of stature and weake of strength, may with a little removing of his foot, a sodain turning of his hand, a slight declining of his bodie, subdue and overcome the fierst braving pride of tall and strong bodies.

Moreover, it doth many times come to passe that discords and quarrels arise amongst souldiers and Gentlemen of honor & account, the which (when they cannot be accorded & compounded by lawe, learning, and perswasion) must bee determined, and the truth thereof tried by armes and combat. And therefore he that is wise, carefull of his safetie, and provident against danger, will be at all times stored and furnished with this honorable urgent necessity, and instant shortnes of time, he shal be constrained to expose himself unto evident danger.

Wherefore upon the occasions, and also for that I have bin thereunto requested by sundrie Gentlemen my good friendes, I have endeavoured to expresse in this discourse, and to make plain by pictures all the skill and knowledge which I have in this art: Exhorting all men of good mindes and noble spirities to learne and purchase the same, not to the end to abuse it in insolencies and injuries, but to use it in cases of necessitie for the defence of just causes, and to the maintenance of the honour of themselves and others. For whosoever will followe this profession must flie from rashnes, pride, and injurie, and not fall into that soule falt and error which many men incurre, who feeling themselves to be strong of bodie and expert in this science, presuming thereupon, thinke that they may lawfully offer outrage and injury unto anie man, and with crasse and grosse termes and behaviour provoke everie man to fight, as though they were the onely heirs of *Mars*, & more invincible than *Achilles*: not remembring how it hath oftentimes happened, that a little wretched man of stature by skill and reason hath overcome a vast mightie man of person, and overthrowen the unweldie masse and burthen of his bodie upon the face of his kind & liiberall mother the earth. This manner of proceeding and behaviour doth plainly shew that these men (although peradventure they have learned the use of the weapon)

have not yet beene sufficiently instructed in the Arte of Armes. For by the rule and precept of this Art, men are taught by how much they are resolute in courage, and skilful of the use of the same weapon, by so much the more to shew themselves virtuous, humble, and modest both in speech & action, and not to be liers, vanter, or quarrellers, for those which in this sort demeane themselves, (notwithstanding their skill or courage) do commonly carry away wounds and dishonour, and sometimes death.

I have seene and noted in diverse partes of mine owne countrie and in other places of the world, great quarrells springing from small causes, and many men slayne uppon lightr occasions. Amongest other things, I remember that in *Liesena* a citie of *Sclavonia*, it was once my chance to see a sodaine quarrell and slaughter upn very small cause betweene two Italian captaines of great familiaritie and acquaintance. There was in the companie a foolish boy belonging unto one of the Captaines, who going carefully forward, & approaching neere unto the other captaine, began to touch the hilts of his sword, whereupon the captaine lent the boy a little blow to teach him better manners: The other Captaine (the boies master) taking this reprehension of his boy in worse parte than there was cause, after some wordes multiplyed began to drawe his sword, the other Captaine in like sort betaking himselfe to his rapier did with a thrust run him quite through the bodie, who falling downe dead upon the place received the just reward of his frivolous quarrell. And to confesse the plaine truth in this point, it is not well done either of men or boyes to touch the weapons of another man that weareth them. Neverthelesse a man ought in all his actions to seeke and endeavour to live in peace and good agreement (as much as may be) with everie one: and especially he that is a Gentleman and converseth with men of honorable quality, must above all others have a grteat regard to frame his speech and answeres with such respective reverence, that there never growe against him anie quarrell upon a foolish worde or a froward answer, as it often hath and daily doth come to passe, whereupon follow deadly hatreds, cruell murthers, and extreame ruines. Wherefore I saie and let downe as a most undoubted truth, that it is good for everie man to be taught and instructed in the Rapier and Dagger, not the rather thereby to grow insolent, or to commit murther, but to be able and ready in a case of just necessitie to defend himselfe, either as the sodaine, or upon defiance and in field assigned: for at that time it is too late to looke backe and to intend this studie, as many doo, who having appointed the time and place for fight, doe practice some point or other of this arte, the which being so lightly learned and in such hast, doth afterwards in time of need prove but little helpfull or available unto them. But this knolwedge doeth more particularly appertayne unto Gentlemen and souldiers that professe and followe warres, for they more than other men, will

(for the credite of their calling, and the honor of Armes) dispute and determine with the point of the sword all points that passe in controversie, especially amongst themselves, who had rather die than not to have reason and satisfaction for everie worde of prejudice and disgrace offered unto them. Now in this case I am to exhort and advise men of all sortes and condition, as well the skilfull as the unskilfull, not to bee in anie wise to suspitious, nor to catch (as they saie) at everie flie that passeth by, for in so dooing, they purchase to themselves endlesse trouble, and enter into actions full of danger and dishonour, but rather to shunne as much as they can all occasions of quarrell, and not to fight excepte (as hath bene sayde) upon a just cause and in a point of honor. And to the end that everie man may know what to doo, and bee able to practise as much as hee knoweth (at the request of certaine Gentlemen my good friends, & to make the world witnes of my gratefull minde towards them for the many curtesies which I have received at their handes since my first coming into this Countrie) out of those preceptes which I have learned from the most rare and renowned professors that have bin of this Art in my time, and out of that experience which I have observed in diverse fraies and fights, I have composed and framed this little worke, containing the noble Arte of the Rapier and Dagger, the which I have set down in manner of a Dialogue, &c.

Vincentio Saviolo

His Practise

I

Having long and greatly desired (my deare friend V.) to learnne this noble science, and especially of you, who did put the first weapons into my hands: wherefore (seeing so good opportunitie is so fitly presented) I could wishe that wee might spende this time at some discourse concerning the Arte of the Rapier and Dagger, to the end that I might thereby, both the better retaine the title which I have already learned, and also adde some new lesson thereunto.

V. Certes (my loving friend L) as well for that I have found you to be a man of a noble spirite, as in regard of the great love which I bear unto you, as also to the end that hereafter when time shall serve, you may be better knowen unto sundry Gentlemen my good friends, I am content to yeeld unto your request, and therefore demand bodily any thing wherein you desire to be resolved.

L. Sir, the love which you beare mee I know to bee exceeding great, and therefore have no doubt that you will fayle me in anie part of your promise, for the which favour I acknowlege my selfe infinitely beholding unto you. I shall desire you therefore, according to your judgement and skill, to resolve and instruct mee in such doubts as doo occurre unto me, for I know, and many noble men and Gentlemen do likewise know, that you are exquisitly able not only to resolve us of anie doubt readily, but also to instruct us in this science perfectly.

V. Sir, I desire nothing more than to please and satisfie you and such other Gentlemen my good friends, and therefore you may expounde questions at your pleasure.

L. From my first years I have liked this noble Art, but now doo much more love it, having seen such diversitie of this exercise, together with the danger thereunto belonging, and (since i came to be your scholler) plainly perceived how that a man in one moment may be slaine. And therefore I give God thanks that in some measure hee hath given mee the knowledge of this science, and I hope through your good helpe to bee more fully informed therein. Wherefore I desire you to tell me, if there be given anie certaine instruction and firme rule whereby to direct a man to the true knoledge of hereof.

V. Since my childhoode I have seen verie many masters the which have taken great paines in teaching, and I have marked their diverse manners of playe and indangering: wherefore (both for the particular contentment & pleasure of the Gentlemen my friends, and for the general help & benefit of many) I have changed five or six sundry maner of plaies, taught to me by diverse masters, and reduced them unto one by my no little labour and paine, and in this will I resolve you, and geve you therein so direct a rule and instruction, as that thereby (being my scholler) you may attain unto the perfect knowledge of this science.

L. But tell me sir of curtesie, those which have not bene your schollers, are they therefore debarred from the understandings of your said rule.

V. In truth sir, well they may learne and conceive much, but of those secrets which I will reveale unto you are they are not so capable as those whom I have taught.

L. Shew me (I praie you) what may bee the cause, why this arte (being so necessaire and noble) is of so many so little esteemed.

V. You have moved a question whereof I am grieved to speake, when I consider with my selfe the slight account wherein this so worthy science is held, I deeme the cause hereof to be either because many which doo (peradventure) understand the same will not professe to teach it, or that many (having in deed no understanding thereof) doe judge the same to consist in their great strength and braving courage, but they deceive themselves. Moreover, I am of this opinion, that many (not knowing this art to be the beginning and foundation of the art Militaire) doe therefore neglect and contemne it, because they esteeme the same to bee a thing unto them altogether impertinent.

L. By what reason can you shew this science to be the ground and foundation of the arte Militarie?

V. You shall heare. This word *Schermize et Scharamuzare*, to skirmish or fence, may be taken either generally or particularly. Generally, for every kind of fight. Particularly for single combat and so it is taken as often as it is indefinitely set down, and not expresly. And being taken in this sense, that it doth necessarily belong unto the arte Militarie may many waies bee proved, for in the arte Militarie it is requisite that a man know how he may best overcome his enemy, and which waie to entertaine him, & as it were to dallie with him untill such time as he can espie some advantage. Againe, wee doo many times see that a great man or a Captaine doeth wrong an inferior person or a souldier, who for that they are men of meaner fortune, do seldome by lawe recover right or credite, wherefore the Prince or Generall (after that partie wronged hath done his dutie, in complaining unto him of the injury received) ought to require and command him by whome the wrong was done, either to make satisfaction unto the partie wronged, if the fact were against reason, or by waie of disgrace, or else to fight the combat with him. Then (being to accept one of these conditions) if hee trie the combat, he can never acquite himself without danger and dishonour, if hee have not fust learned this noble science.

Moreover, if a man follow the warres and converse with Captaines, and incurre a quarrell, and have no knowledge of this arte, what shift shall hee make? Or how shall hee behave himselfe being challenged the combat for his Countrie or his Prince, which hath often happened, not onely in the time of the Romanes, but in our dayes, as we may read in the life of Charles the fifte, and of other Emperours: *Paulus Jovius* and *Guicciardino* do make mention of many combats fought in the kingdome of Naples betweene French-men and Italians for theyr Countrie, whereunto were required and chosen men most famous and skilfull men both of the French and Italian Nation. Wherefore a Captaine or Generall is not perfectly accomplished in all points appertaining to his place

and profession, if hee bee disfurnished of this science: for admit (as it may fall out upon many occasions concerning his Country and his owne honour) he bee challenged the combat, and chance to be overcome therein, although hee have bin renowned for infinite victories, hee hath now lost in one moment all his foregotten glorie, for both the honour of the fight, and the triumph of the victorie doth wholly redound unto him who hath overcome in combat. Neither were his many victories gotten in the field unto him more glorious, than this one foile in single fight is dishonourable, for those victories had many helpe, as horse, armour, opportunitie of time, advantage of place, &c. Those glories many parteners, as souldiers and under officers, but this dishonour doeth wholly fall upon himselfe, as namely for want of this science, without the which no man professing the Arte Militarie, can bee called perfect in his profession, but rather maimed in the principall part thereof, and most concerning the safety and defence of a mans owne life, for this is a branch of that wisdom which holdeth the first place and chiefest preheminance in matters of warre, for he that is devoid of art and skill, doth rashly encounter with his enemy, and so is slaine with scorne and dishonour.

L. This which you saie seemeth to stand with greate reason, yet never the lesse wee see by experience, that men unskilfull and altogether ignorant in this arte have vanquished and overthrowen those which practice the same for theyr dayly exercise, whereas (if your assertion were true) the skilfull should evermore conquer the unskilfull.

V. Sir, you are to understand, that many are called professours of their Rapier and Dagger, and yet bee overcome by men that never practiced the same, but however, not as professours of this science, but as base and unskilfull persons. For in him that will bee rightly called a professour of this arte, and in him that shall goe into the field to fight a combat, are required reason, animositie, strength, dexteritie, judgement, wit, courage, skill, and practice: wherefore it may bee that those which are overcome bee men of base mindes, or voide of reason, and falsely called professours of that arte whereof they have no understanding, and which they doo but discredite. Others are so head-strong and rash, that they doo lyke rammes which kill themselves by running full but at theyr enemies. But to have recourse unto the first and highest cause, these actions are evermore directed by the secret will of God, and are the executions of his hidden judgements.

L. Certainly sir, when I consider your reasons, I am confounded in mine owne judgement, for your speech doeth necessarily inferre, that if a man bee able,

strong, active, wise, skilful, valiaunt, and not quarellous, he shall bee conquerour, if otherwise, conquered.

V. Let us omit therefore as a speciall and extraordinarie cause, that sometimes God suffereth and permitteth the contrarie: and take this for an infallible rule and grounde, that everie one renounceth and forsaketh that helpe which God hath appointed, as often as hee despiseth and contemneth this Arte, and that God hath given us wit and understanding to discern and knowe the good and the badde: which beeing so, it must needes followe, that if a man will not defend himselfe nor doo his best to obtaine victorie, he must be overcome although his quarrell and cause were most just and reasonable, because he will not use the means which God hath appointed, and therefore must blame himselfe only for his ill hap and successe. Wherefore it cannot be denied but that this knowledge and skill which groweth and riseth from this art of Defence is necessary. And therefore I say that when upon just ground and occasion a man shall take a quarrell in hand, and shal have courage, reason, boldnes, and force to maintaine it, having also the meanes and helpe of this art, it will seldome or never chauce but that he shall overcome his adversary, and upon this reason and ground proceedeth my argument. But when he forsaketh the favour and benefit graunted by God, in that he wil not learne how to defend himselfe: if the quite contrary happen to him he must impute the fault and blame to himselfe. And therefore I must tell you this also, that he hath most neede of this art which lacket courage and strength, because that by this art and practice he groweth in ure with his weapon, and to have skill and judgement to defend himselfe. And this also I saye, that strength and valiant courage is not it which giveth victorie, but a skill and knowledge in the use of his weapon, and a certaine nimbleness and actiuitie aswell of the body as of the hand and the foot.

L. In sooth by that which you say, it seemes to me that nature is she which worketh and perfourmeth all, and not art, because that from nature commeth courage, force, and a right frame and aptnes of the body, therefore he which shal be furnished with these partes and shall undertake a right and just cause, is like to beare away the victory without having any or very little skill in the art of Defence.

V. Certes we may graunt, that nature may doo very much to frame a man apt and fit for this exercise, both in respect of convenient courage and strength, but all these abilities and giftes which nature can bestow on a man, are nothing except he have knowledge or arte, for we see that the very things themselves which are brought foorth by nature good and perfect, if they be not holpen by

arte, by very course of nature become naught and unprofitable. As the Vine if it be not holpen by art comes to no prooffe nor profit, so likewise other trees how apt so ever they be to bring forth excellent frutes, if they are not husbanded growe wilde, and degenerate from their naturall perfection. Suppose that nature bring forth a most goodly and beautifull tree, if it begin once to growe crooked and be holpen it looseth all his beautye, and therefore as you see, arte is an aide and helpe to nature: so that one having those good partes and abilities by nature before mentioned, yet not knowing them, he can not use them to his benefite but by the meanes of skill and judgement; which a man by his industrie and practice attaineth unto. And although he may strike right and crosse blows and give the foyne and thruse, yet these being not guided by reason and skill, may as well harme him as profit or procure him any advantage: but art which imitateth and perfiteth nature, if a man apply his minde thereunto, by many experimentes and much practice, will make him skilfull and capable of great perfection. And to prove that this is true, we see little infants which although as soone as they are borne they have a tung, yet they cannot speake, and after when they have learned to speake, yet they want eloquence: nature maye bestowe a gift of memory, which when it is accompanied with art and knowledge, they are able in good sorte to expresse their minde and conceipt. How can you be skilfull in riding if you have not learned the arte, nature may helpe, but not bring to perfection: how is it possible that you should prove a skilfull Carpenter or Saylor, if you have not by practice acquainted your selfe with those thinges which appertaine thereunto: how can a man be a professour in any art or science, unlesse he have learned it first hmselve: and therefore they which make so finall reckoning of art, in my fancie and conceipt in this respect are worse than beastes, especially those which are practiced in fight, in which a man may perceive a kinde of reason and arte, and for prooffe of this, take a young Dog which hath not been accustomed to fight, and set him on a Bull, and you shal see him assaile him with more courage and fiercenes then another which hath been beaten and practisde in the matter, but you shall see him by and by hurte and wounded: whereas in the other you shall see the quite contrary, for before he set upon his adversary you shall see him spie all advantages that maye be, and having found his advantage he wil after make an affault, wherefore those braggers which without judgement and reason will take upon them to kill the whole worlde, at the least wise should order and governe themselves more discretely then beastes: and if they being without reason can help themselves with art which is taught them how much rather should a man which is indued with reason make his profit thereof, seeke to learne it and not to scorne and despise it, especially in such a case where so deepely it concerneth a mans life, that in the stirring of a foote he may be soddenlye overtaken and slaine: but the more skill a man hath of his weapon the more

gentle and curteous should he shewe himselfe, for in truth this is rightly the honour of a brave Gentleman, and so much the more is hee to bee esteemed: neither must he be a bragger, or lyer, and without ruth in his word, because there is nothing more to be required in a man then to know himselfe, for me therefore I think it necessarye that every one should learne this arte, for as a man hath voice and can sing by nature, but shall never doo it with time and measure of musicke unlesse he have learned the arte: and as a horse may be strong and fyt for fight by nature, but can not serve a man to any use in the feelde unlesse he have beene first broken and taught, and framed to be obedient to his maisters pleasure and minde: So much more should a man learne how to mannage and use his body, his hand and his foote, and to know how to defend himselfe from his enemy. And heereupon we see, that how stoute or couragious soever a man be, yet when he is challenged into the feelde he seeks then to learn the skill and practice of his weapon of some brave and skilfull man against the daye of the fight and combate, and for no other cause but that he knoweth that it is necessarye for him, & that it concerneth his honor and life: and they which affirme the contrary, if ever they have occasion to fight, shall perceiv to their disadvantage and discredit, how much they have erred and bene out of the way: and this which we have discoursed hitherto as I think may suffise to prove the necessitie of this arte.

L. You have with so manye reasons and proofes shewed the necessitie of this worthie art, that in truth I greatly esteeme and honor it, and could wish that every man of honour would seeke to know it and practise it, that it might be more esteemed: but now that I know the excellency of this art, I would gladly know wherein consisteth the order and manner to udnerstand it.

V. Certes my freend L. I will not faile in that which I have promised. And therefore I wil begin this small worke, to leave some remembrance of me, with these Gentlemen and my good freendes, and with you who are desirous to understand it, and especially because I have alwaies found you to be a lover of gentleman-like qualities.

L. I thanke you sir for your good will and good opinion conceived of me, and therefore according to the desire which you hvae to make me understand this worthie arte, I require you to tell me with what weapon a good teacher minding to make a good scholler ought to begin.

V. So I will, yet I must tell you, that I have seene many brave sufficient men teach with great diversitie and divers sortes and fashions of play: and I my selfe have had many teachers, and found them all to differ one from the otehr.

L. But I pray you of freendship tell me how there can be such disagreement, since that all that art consisteth in down right or crosse blowes, thrustes, foynes, or overthwart prickes.

V. That which you say, verilye is true, but consider also that we see many precious stones, and yet the one to be more esteemed than the other, although they be of the same sorte and kinde: and we see many excellent men which studie the same art, and yet one is more esteemed then the other, as well ingravers as Painters: the same is seene amongst learned men, all are learned, but one is better learned then the other: and the like is to be seene in all sciences and artes, and so in this noble art God hath given more to one, then to another. I will begin therefore to tell you how that of many that teach, some begin and enter their schollers with the rapier and Dagger, some with the Rapier and Cloake, some with the Rapier and Buckler, and some with the Rapier alone: some after one sorte and some after another.

L. Is it not all one for a scholler to begin with the Rapier alone, or with the Rapier and Cloake, or any other weapon: may not he become a brave man, as well with one weapon as with another?

V. Surely, they may prove well, but not so well as those which begin with the true ground, the which schollers should learne of good maisters, and teachers should with all diligence teach their schollers.

L. And what I pray you is this ground?

V. The true foundation verily and the true beginning from whence you may learne all things belonging to this art, is the Rapier alone, and from it will I begin, and you shal perceve of what great importance this beginning is, and how without it hardly or never any commeth to true skill and perfection: yet proceed you to aske such questions as you shall thinke best, and take good heede to that which shall say, for I will beginne as I tolde you.

L. In truth M. *Vincent*, although as yet I have no great skill, yet me thinkes you have reason in your assertion, and that you have got the right and true knowledge of this science, and therefore I praye you shew me the reasno why the Rapier alone is the ground and beginning of this art.

V. The reason as I take it, is because that amongst Knightes, Captaines and valiant Souldiours, the Rapier is it which sheweth who are men of armes and of honour, and which obtaineth right for those which are wronged: and for this reason it is made with two edges and one point, and being the weapon which

ordinarily Noble men, Knightes, Gentlemen and Souldiours weare by their side, as being more proper and fit to be worne then other weapons: therefore this is it which must first be learned, especiallye being so usuall to be worne and taught. In my discourse therefore of this fight of the single rapier I will speake onelye of three wardes.

L. Tell me I pray you first how it is best to holde a mans Rapier in his hand, and how to stand upon his garde.

V. For your Rapier, holde it as you shall thinke most fit and commodious for you, but if I might advise you you should not hold it after this fashion, and especially with the second finger in the hylte, for holding it in that sorte, you cannot reach so farre either to strike direct or crosse blowes, or to give a foyne or thrust, because your arme is not free and at liberty.

L. How then would you have me holde it?

V. I would have you put your thumbe on the hylte, and then the next finger toward the endge of the Rapier, for so you shall reach further and strike more readily.

L. You have fully satisfied me concerning this matter, but I pray you proceede and shew me how I must stand upon my garde, or assaile myne enemy.

V. So I will, and as before I have told you of diversitie of teachers and varietie of wardes, so in ths poynt also must I tell you that mens fashions are divers, for some set upon their enemies in running, and there are other which assaile them with rage and furye after the fashion of Rammes, and both these sortes of men for the moste parte are slaine and come to misfortune, as may be seene in many places of such like fights. Which I speak not as though those two fightes were not good for him which knowes how to use them, because that sometimes they are very necessary, according as a man findes his enemy prepared with his weapon, but then they must be doone with time and measure, when you have got your enemye at an advantage, with great dexteritie and readines. But as for me I will shewe you the wardes which I my selfe use, the which if you well marke and observe, you cannot but understand the art, and withall keepe your bodye safe from hurte and danger.

L. At this present I take wonderfull delight in your companye, and nothing pleaseth me so much as this discourse of yours, to heare you give me the reasons of those things which so much concerne the life and honour of a man: wherefore performe that which you have promised, wherein you shall not

onely pleasure mee, but many other gentlemen and Noble men will thinke themselves to have received a favour at your handes, therefore begin I pray you.



V. That which I have promised you I will now performe, therefore I say, that when a teacher will begin to make a Scholler, (as for me I will begin with the single Rapier, and at this weapon will firste enter you, to the end you maye frame your hand, your foote, and your body, all which partes must goe together, and unlesse you can stirre and move all these together, you shall never be able to performe any great matter, but with great danger) I come therefore to the point and say, that when the teacher will enter his scholler, he shal cause him to stand upon this ward, which is very good to bee taught for framing the foote, the hand, and the body: so the teacher shall deliver the Rapier into his hand, and shall cause him to stand with his right foote formost, with his knee somewhat bowing, but that his body rest more upon the lefte legge, not stedfast and firme as some stand, which seeme to be nayled to the place, but with a readines and nimblenes, as though he were to perform some feate of activitie, and in this sorte let them stand both to strike and to defend themselves. Now when the maister hath placed his scholler in this sorte, and that the scholler hath received his Rapier into his hand, let him make his hand free and at lyberty, not by force of the arme, but by the nimble and ready moving of the joynt of the wriste of the hand, so that his hand be free and at libertie from his body, and that the ward of his hand be directlye against his right knee, and let the teacher also put himselfe in the same ward, and holde his Rapier against the middest of his schollers Rapier, so that the pobnt be directly against the face of his scholler, and likewise his schollers against his, and let their feete be right one against another, then shall the maister begin to teach him, moving his right foot somewhat on the right side in circle wise, putting the point of his Rapier under his schollers Rapier, and so giving him a thrust in the belly.

L. And what then must the scholler doo?

V. At the selfesame time the scholler must remove with like measure or counter-time with his right foote a little aside, and let the left foote follow the irtht, turning a little his bodye on the right side, thrusting with the point of his Rapier at the belly of his teacher, turning readily his hand that the fingers be inward toward the body, and the joint of the wrist shall be outward. In this sorte the saide scholler shall learne to strike and not be stricken, as I alwaies advise the noble-men and gentlemen whit whome I have to deale, that if they cannot hit or hurt their enemy, that they learn to defend them selves that they be not hurt. Then to make the scholler more ready, the teacher shall cause his scholler firste to part, wherefore he shall remove with his right foot on the right side a little in circle wise as the maister did before to the scholler.

L. What then must the maister or teacher doo?

V. At the same time that the scholler removeth his foote, the teacher shall play a little with stirring of his body, and with his lefte hand shall beat away his schollers rapier from his right side, and shall remove his right foot behinde his left striking a crosse blow at the head.

L. And the scholler what shall he doo?

V. When I remove with my foote and lifte up my hand, let the scholler passe with his lefte foote where his right was, and withall let him turne his hand, and not loose the opportunity of this blow, which must be a foyne in the manner of a thrust under his Rapier, and let him lifte up his hand with his ward that he be garded and lie not open, meeting with his left hand the rapier of his teacher, and let him not beat aside the blow with his Rapier for hee endangereth the point and bringes his life in hazard, because he loseth the point: But I wil goe forward. At the selfesame time that the scholler goes back, the maister shall play a little, and shifting his body shall breake the same [imbroccata](#) or foyne outward from the lefte side, removing with his left foote, which must be carried behinde the right, and withall shall give a [mandritta](#) at the head of his scholler, at which time the scholler must remove with his right foote, following with his lefte, and let him turne his Rapier hand as I have saide, and that the scholler observe the same time in going backe as the teacher shall, to the end that his point maye be toward the bellye of his maister, and let him lifte up his other hand with his ward on high, that he be not stricken on the face with the [mandritta](#), or in the belly with the thrust or [stoccata](#). Wherefore at the selfesame time that the scholler shall deliver the foresaide [stoccata](#) to the teacher, the teacher shall yeelde and shrinke with his bodye, and beate

the [stoccata](#) outwards on the left side, and shall bring his right foot a little aside in circle wise upon the right side, & shall give an [imbroccata](#) to the face of his scholler, at which time the saide scholler shall go backe with his right foote a little aside with the same measure, and shall beate aside the [imbroccata](#) of his maister with his left hand outward from the left side, and withall shall deliver the like [imbroccata](#) of countertime to the teacher, but onely to the face, and then the maister shall goe backe with his right foote toward the left side of his scholler, in breaking with his left hand the saide [imbroccata](#) outward from the left side, and shall strike a downe right blowe to his head, because that by beating aside his foyne with his hand, he shall finde him naked and without garde.

L. And what then, cannot the Scholler defend him selfe?

V. Yes very easilye with a readie dexteritie or nimblenes, for at the same time that the maister shall give the saide [mandritta](#), the scholler shall doo nothing else but turne the pointe of his foote toward the bodye of his maister, and let the middest of his left foote directly respect the heele of the right and let him turn his body upon the right side, but let it rest and staye upon the left, and in the same time let him turne the Rapier hand outward in the [stoccata](#) or thrust, as I have given you to understand before, that the point be toward the bellye of his maister, and let him lifte up his hand and take good heede that hee come not forward in delivering the saide [stoccata](#), which is halfe an [incartata](#), for how little forever hee should come forward, he would put himselfe in danger of his life: and beleve me, every man which shall not understand these measures and principles, incurreth the danger of his life: and who so despiseth these grounds which are necessarye as well for the schoole as the combat, it may bee to his confusion & dishonour, and losse of his life: wherefore everye one which makes profession of this art, should seek to learn them and understand them.

L. For this matter I am fullye satisfied, wherefore I praye you proceed to teach me that which remaineth to be taught for this ward.

V. When the maister will make his scholler readye, hee shall practise him to be the first in going backe, by removing his right foote a little aside in circle wise, as before his maister did to him, and let him with great readines thrust his Rapier under his teachers, and give him a thrust or [stoccata](#) in the belly.

L. What then shall the teacher doo?

V. He shall shift his body a little, and shall beate the [stoccata](#) or thrust outward from the right side, and shall remove with his right foote, which must bee

conveied behinde the lefte, and shall strike a [rinversa](#) at his schollers head, as before: and further, to the end his scholler may have judgement to knowe what fight mmeanes, with measure and time, hee shall teach him to give a [mandritta](#), and to know when the time serveth for it.

L. What I pray you, cannot every one of himselfe without teaching give a [mandritta](#)?

V. Yes, every man can strike, but everye man hath not the skill to strike, especiallye with measure, and to make it cutte: and heereupon you shall see manye which oftentimes will strike and hitte with the flatte of their Rapier, without hurting our wounding the adversarye: and likewise many, when they would strike a downe-right blowe, will goe forward more then measure, and so cause themselves to be slaine. Wherefore I saye, when the maister and scholler shall stand upon this ward, and that the point of the schollers weapon shall be against the face of the teacher, and the pointe of the teachers weapon nigh to the ward of the schollers Rapier, and that it be stretched out, the scholler shall remove with his right foot a little aside in circle wise, and with the inside of his left hand barrachet wise shall bet away his maisters Rapier, firste lifting his above it, and let the lefte foot followe the right: and let him turne skilfully his body, or else he shall be in danger to receive a [stoccata](#) either in the face or bellye. Therefore hee must take heede to save himselfe with good time and measure, and let him take heede that he steppe not forward toward his teacher, forso hee should bee in danger to be wounded: but let him go a little aside, as I have already saide.

L. Me thinkes the maister is in danger, if the scholler at this time keepe measure.

V. If the maister stode still, hee should bee in danger, but when the scholler shall give the [mandritta](#), the maister must shifte a little with his bodye, and shall remooove with his right foote, which must be carried behinde his lefte, and shall strike a riverso to the head, as I saide before, when I began to speake of [stoccata](#).

Furthermore, the Scholler maye likewise give a [mandritta](#) at the legges, but it standes upon him to playe with great nimblenes and agilitye of bodye, for to tell the truth, I would not advise anye freend of mine, if hee were to fight for his credite and life, to strik neither [mandrittaes](#) nor [riversaes](#), because he puts himselfe in danger of his life: for to use the poynte is more readie, and spendes not the lyke time: and that is my reason, why I would not advise any of my friends to use them.

L. But I praye you of freendship tell me, if a man were to goe into the feelde with some freend of his whome hee would bee loth to kill, should not these [mandrittaes](#) be good to wound him, and not put him in danger of his life, I praye you therefore tell mee your opinion, and how a man in respect of his honour were to use and order himselfe, put the case he would not kill his freend, but would willingly save and keepe him from harme.

V. I will speake mine opinion of these things which concerne a mans life and honour, and firste I would wish every one which is challenged into the feeld, to consider that he which challengeth him, dooth not require to fight with him as a freend, but as an enemye, and that he is not to thinke any otherwise of his minde but as full of rancor and malice towards him: wherefore when you ?? with weapons in his hand that will needes ?? with you, although hee were your freend or kinseman, take him for an enemye, and trust him not, how great a freend or how nigh of kin soever he be, for the inconvenience that may grow therby, is seene in many histories both ancient and moderne. But when you see the naked blade or weapon, consider that it meanes redresse of wrong, justice, and revenge: and therefore if he be your freend that will needs fight with you, you maye tell him that you have given him no cause, nor offred any wrong, and if any other have made any false report, & that he is to prove and justifie it, that for your selfe, if by chaunce without your knowledge you have offended him, that you are ready with reason to satisfie him and make amendes. But if they be matters that touch your honour and that you bee compelled to accept of the combat, doo the best you can when you have your weapon in your hand, and consider that fightes are dangerous, and you know not the minde and purpose of your enemye, whome if you should chance to spare, afterwards peradventure he may kill you or put you in danger of your life, especially when you use the [mandritta](#) or right blowes: for if he be either a man skilfull at his weapon, or fierce or furious, he may peradventure doo that to you, which you would not doo, (when you might) to him. Wherefore if hee bee your friend goe not with him into the feelde, but if you go, doe your best, because it seemeth childish to saie, I will go and fight, but I will spare and favour him. For if you were the valiauntest man in the world, and had no minde to doo him anie harme, yet when you see the furie and malice of your enemye, you shall be forced, as it were, to doo that you thought not to doo, for which you may peradventure be sorie, and disquieted in mind as long as you live, as well in respect of freendship, if you kill your friend, as for the punishment which the lawes will inflict and laie uppon you, whether it be losse of goods, imprisonment, or death. And on the other side, if you be slaine or wounded, it is no excuse for you to saie afterward, that you favoured him & did not so much as you might, for in such a case everie man will thinke as he list: so that if your enemye were

the most coward and base man that might bee, yet he shall bee counted the more valiaunt and brave man. Therefore if it happen that some friend of yours hath a quarrell against you, tell him that you will not have any thing to doo with him: and fight with your enemie, not with your friend: neither account him your friend that will fight with you: well you may be his friend, but you shall finde him to be your enemie. Therefore whensoever you see anie man drawe upon you, staie not untill hee doo his pleasure, and trust him not, for hee hath not his weapon drawn to no purpose: and if in that sorte hje will talk of the matter with you, cause him to stand aloofe off, and so let him speake: for of the inconvenience that hath growen thereby wee have many examples, as I will shew you more at large by and by. I woul wish that everie one should beware to offend any man either in wordes or deedes, and if you have offered offence, seeke to make amends, as a civill and honest man should, and suffer not the matter to grow to such extremitie and inconvenience, as wee see examples everie daie, whereby God is highly displeased. And amongst others I will tell you of an accident which hath happened in *Padoua*, where I my selfe was borne, of a master of Fence called M. *Angelo* of *Alezza*, who many yeres brought up, maintained, and taught a nephew of his, in such sort, that hee became a verie sufficient and skilfull man in this art. Which his nephew, whereas by reason should have beene loving and faithfull to him, as to his own father, having so long eaten of his bread, and received from him so many good turnes, especially having bene brought up by him from his childhoode and infancie, he did the quite contrarie, for his uncle *Angelo* yet living and teaching schollers, hee openly dyd teach and plaie with many, and by that meanes came acquainted with many Gentlemen, so that hee set up a schoole of Fence, and beganne to teach, entising awaie many which were schollers of his uncle *Angelo*. A part truly verie vile, and of an unkinde unthankfull man. Whereupon the sayd *Angelo* complained of this injury and wrong offered by his nephew, to a gentleman who was his scholler and loved him entirely, shewing howe his nephew had not onely impaired his credite, but defrauded him of the aide and helpe which he looked for at his hands, having brought him up, as I have said, and especially being now growen old. Which nephew (as he said) in respect of kindred, bringing up, and teaching of his arte and skill, was bound to have shewed him all friendship and curtesie. Heereupon the Gentleman, *Angelo* his scholler, promised to seeke redresse, although hee was a friende also unto the nephewe of *Angelo*. And so, by badde happe, finding the sayde nephew of *Angelo*, tolde him that for the wrong offered to his master and uncle, he would fight with him, and therewithall put hande to his weapon: the other refused to fight with him because hee was his friend: but the Gentleman tolde him that if hee woulde not defend himselfe hee woulde runne him thorough: as hee dyd in deede, for whilest hee stode uppon tearmes, and

would not do his best to defend himselfe, he ranne him quite thorough the bodie. Thereupon when a man sees anie one with a drawen weapon, let him take care to defend himselfe, because it is not a matter of friendship. But I think verily in this man, that the justice of God and his own conscience took awaie all courage and wit of defending himselfe. And this was the ende of his unthankfulnesse, which God would not leave unpunished. And if all unthankfull and treacherous men were so served after the same sorte, I thinke there woulde not be found so many: and truly of all vices, I take this unthankfulnesse to be one of the greatest that is incident to man. Therefore to conclude this matter, I woulde counsell and advise everie one, to give as small occasion of offence anie waie unto anie as may be, and especially unto his friend, to whom hee is in anie sorte beholding: but when that hee is forced to laie hande on his weapon, to doe the best hee can, as well in respect of his credite, as for to save his owne lyfe.

L. Verily this example which you have heere brought in, is verie good and necessarie, as well to instruct and teach a man not to trust his enimie when he seeth him comming with his weapon in his hand, as also to warne these unthankfull men to bee more true and faithfull. But I praie you go forward to tell me that which is behinde concerning this ward.

V. I will verie willingly, but I praie mislike not that I have somewhat digressed from the matter which wee were about, for I have spoken these few words not with out cause, but now I will go forwarde with that which remaineth. Therefore I saie, when the master and scholler stand upon this ward, and that the point of the schollers weapon is towarde the face of the teacher, and the pont of the masters without the bodie of the scholler toward the right side, both of them being upon this ward, the scholler must bee readie and nimble to remooove with his left foote, that the point or ende thereof bee against the middest of his masters right foot, turning his Rapier hand, and that his point be in imbrocata-wise above his teachers Rapier, and that his left hand bee toward the ward of his teacher: and let all this be done at once, by which meanes the scholler shall come to have his masters weapon at commandment, and if it were in fight, his enemies.

L. This plaie which now you tell me of, me thinkes is contrarie to many other, and I my selfe have seen many plaie and teache cleane after another fashion, for I have seene them all remove in a right line, and therefore you shall doe mee a pleasure to tell mee which in your opinion, is best to use, either the right or circular line.

V. I will tell you, when you stand upon this ward, if you remove in a right line, your teacher or your adversarie may give you a [stoccata](#) either in the bellie or in the face. Besides, if your master or your adversarie have a Dagger he may doo the like, hitting you with his dagger either in the belly or on the face, besides other harms which I list not to write. And therefore to proceede, I saie, that in my opinion and judgement, it is not good to use the right line, whereas in remooving in circular-wise, you are more safe from your enemie, who cannot in such sort hurt you, and you have his weapon at commandement: yea although he had a dagger hee coulde not doo you anie harme.

L. But I praie you tell me whether the master may save himselfe when the scholler makes this remove upon him in circular wise, without being hurt.

V. When the scholler removeth with his left foot, the master must steppe backe, but yet in such sorte, that the lefte foote be behinde the right, and that he remove to the right side, and shall strike a [mandritta](#) at the head of the scholler, and whilst the master shifteth with his foot and striket the [mandritta](#), at the selfe same time must the scholler bee with his right foot where the teachers was, being followed with his lefte, and shall deiyver a [stoccata](#) or thrust in his masters belly, turning his bodie together with his hand on the lefte side, and lifting his hand on high, to the end the master may in striking hit his Rapier, and withall shall strike at the teacher, at which time the teacher must remoove with his right foote a little aside, followed with his lefte, and shifting a little with his bodie, shall beate outwarde the thrust or [stoccata](#) of his scholler, and shall deliver an [manriversa](#) in this ward. Therefore when the scoer shal find his teacher with his point somewhat at length, that is not towards his face, but towardes his belly, then must the scholler with his left hand beat aside his masters rapier, not at the point, but in the strength and midst of the weapon, and withall must remoove with his lefte foot, both which must be done at once: and let the same foot be against the right foot of the master, as he did before in the foine or [imbroccata](#), delivered above and under the rapier: and the teacher at the same time must doo the like, remooving with his right foote, as I have sayd before. And as the scholler removes and beates aside the weapon, let his left hand be sodainly upon the ward of his teacher, and in giving they say the [riversa](#) or crosse blowe, let the scholler skilfully turne his Rapier hand, that the knuckle or joynt may be toward the head of the teacher, for otherwise he may give him a slicing or cutting blow, which we call [Stramazone](#): therefore let him perform those things skilfully and at once, and especially let him beware that he doo not beate aside his teachers weapon toward the point, because he shoulde be in danger to receive a thrust or [stoccata](#) either in the face or belly. Besides, the scholler, so that he find his teacher in the same ward, that his

Rapier bee somewhat at length, & not directly upon the face, may strike the said [riversa](#) or crosse blowe at his legs: but beating aside the Rapier with his hande must bee done readily, and hee must remove with his hande in such sorte, that his Rapier when the lefte hand beates it by, may be betweene his owne hand and his teachers weapon: and with this readinesse must he strike this [riverso](#), but withall, his lefte hand must bee uppon the warde of his teacher.

L. But tell mee I praie you, is it not all one if I take hold of the arme of my teacher or adversarie, in sted of laying my hande uppon his warde?

V. No in deede, for if your enemie were skilfull in this art, whilst you catch him by the hand or arme, hee might with his lefte hand seize upon his weapon & put you in danger of your life. So that you must take heed to have all advantage of your enemie, that hee may not in anie sort do you anie harme: in dooing of which, you shall alwaies be to good for him.

L. But tell me of friendship, if you take this ward to be good, as well for the fields as the schoole.

V. This ward which I have shewed you, in my opinion, is verie profitable to bee taught, because it breeds a judgement of the time, and a readinesse and nimblenesse as well of the hand as the foote, together with the body: and from this you come prepared to learne other wards with more facilitie, and to have a greater insight and understanding in many things, so that for many respects it is verie commodious, good, & necessarie. Now also for fight, this ward is verie good to bee understood, and to bee fullye had and learned with beeing much practised therin, and made verie readie as well wyth the hand as the foote without loosing anie time: and so much the rather for that we see many Nations use this ward in fight verie much, especially with the single rapier, both Italians, French-men, Spaniards, & Almanes. Wherefore I advise every one to seeke to understand it, learne it, and acquaint himselfe with it, that hee may come to that readinesse and knowledge to doo all at once, without making anie fault or false point in the said ward: by reason of many inconveniences which have chaunced, and which daily chance, which I will speake of when time serveth: but in the meane while we will go forward with this second ward, in which the scholer shall learne to give the [stoccata](#) and [stoccata](#) to the head, as in the first ward.

L. But I pray you why doo you use so many [stoccataes](#) and [imbroccataese](#)?

V. Because they may learne the just time and measure, and make the foote, hand and body readily agree together, and understand the way to give

the [stoccata](#) and [imbroccata](#) right: so that these principles are very necessarye, and will serve for the Rapier and dagger, therefore whosoever will make a perfect sholler, let him shew the principles in this warde.

L. I perceive very well, that these things which you have spoken of, are to be doon with great agility and quicknes, but especially by the maister, if he entend to make a perfect scholler, because the maister often putteth himself in danger, and the scholler regardeth him not, neither is his hand firme: and therefore the maister must be respective two waies: in saving him selfe, and not hurting his scholler: but (I praye you) are these thinges as good in fight, as necessary to be practised?

V. I have taught you already how to place your self in this ward, with the just distance and time belonging thereunto.

L. But I pray you instruct me a little further concerning time.

V. As soone as your Rapier is drawne, put your selfe presently in garde, seeking the advantage, and goe not leaping, but while you change from one ward to another, be sure to be out of distance, by retiring a little, because if your enemy be skilfull, hee may offend you in the same instant. And note this well, that to seek to offend, being out of measure, and not in due time, is very dangerous: wherefore as I tolde you before, having put your selfe in garde, and charging your adversarye, take heed how you go about, and that your right foot be formost, stealing the advantage by little & little, carrying your lefte legge behinde, with your poynt within the poynte of your enemies sword, and so finding the advantage in time and measure, make a [stoccata](#) to the belly or face of your enemy, as you shall finde him unguarded.

L. Are there many sortes of times?

V. Many are of divers opinions in that pointe, some hold that there are foure times, other five, and some six, and for mine own parte, I thinke there are many times not requisite to be spoken of, therefore when you finde your enemye in the time and measure before taught, then offer the [stoccata](#), for that is the time when your enemye will charge you in advancing his foot, and when he offereth a direct [stoccata](#), in lifting or moving his hand, then is the time: but if hee will make a [stoccata](#), that you come not forward with both your feet, because if he be skilfull at his weapon, he may meete you with counter-time, and put you in danger of your life: and therefore seeke to carrye your right foot together with your hand, being a little followed with your left foote.

Moreover, when you finde that your enemy holds downe his pointe, and his hand alofte, seeke to stand well upon your garde, that your hand bee ready with your right knee somewhat bending towards your enemy, and your body somewhat leaning on the left side, because if your enemye would give you a thrust or stoccata, hee should come a great deale shorte of reaching your bellye with his poynte, and especiallye he wanting that knowledge, which those have who are furnished with the right skill of this arte. Wherefore if he give you a stoccata or thrust in the bellye, you must beat it down with your left hand, outward from your lefte side, and withall you maye give him a stoccata or thrust either in the bellye or the face: and if hee make a foyne or imbrocata to your face above your head, you must be nimble with it, and may beate it aside with your hand, the inside outward toward your left side, or else without beating it by, deliver him a halfe incartata with your poynt, which must be within his, and let it be towards his bellye, so that all these be doone with measure and time. But if you finde your enemye with his poynt downe, you must stand upon the lefte side, and when you have got him within your proportion, you may give him a stoccata or thrust, either in the belly or the face, and you are safe from his pointe: for if he will make a stoccata to you, if you have skill to beate it aside with your hand, & to answeere him again, you must needes hit him. And if he give a foine or imbrocata, you may reach him the incartata, as before I have tolde yon.

L. You have done me a great pleasure, and I know it will stand me in great steed if I should have occasion to fight, to knowe these times and proportions, which are to be observed: but I pray you tel me if one, who is skilfull and valiant should assaile me, whether this ward be good to be used in fight, or else whether I also should strike and answeere him with the same?

V. If you will do as I will advise you, I saie it is verie good either to assaile anie, or to tarrie and watch your advantage, if you have skill to stand upon it, & to carrie your foot, hand and bodie together, holding your Rapier short, and that your point bee towarde the face of your enemye. For if your enemye have skill in fence, and should not finde you to stand surely upon your gard in this assault, he might deliver a straight stoccata to your face, not purposing fully to hit him, which if you should breake with your Rapier, he might put his under yours, comming forward aside toward your right hande, and might give you a stoccata in the face. Moreover, putting the case that your adversarie were skilfull and cunning in fight, and you not much acquainted therewith, if he should not find you upon a sure ward, he himselfe being in proportion, and finding your pointe without his belly, he might reach you a stoccata in the belly, or an halfe incartata, especially if he know in fight how to use his bodie.

Besides, in these assaultes, when he is without your right side with his right foot, hee might offer a stoccata from the outside of your weapon, and if you breake it with your Rapier, hee may pull his point under yours, and withall remove toward your left side with his right foot, and give you a stoccata in the belly, turning skilfully his Rapier hand, so that his fist bee toward his left side. Also if you should deliver a stoccata to your enemie, and that he should breake it with his Rapier, immediatly you might remove with your left foot, your left hand, waiting on the weapon of your enemie, and give him an imbrocata or foine under or above his Rapier, and may be master of his weapon. But if your enemie strike a mandritta at the legges, if you strike it by with your weapon, he may give you a venew either by stoccata or imbrocata. Therefore it is not good for anie man to use these things prescribed, because, as I have alreadie sayd, he had need to understand well his times & proportions, and to know howe with skill to shifte and move his bodie, & to be readie and nimble as well with his foot as hand, otherwise, by his owne meanes he may be wounded or slaine: so that he had need to bee verie cunning and perfect in these matters, whereupon many good masters do practise their schollers in these assalts to make them readie. But I will let them passe, and will satisfie you concerning the skil of this ward, which you have required to know. Therefore I saie, when you shal stand upon this ward, and that you be assailed and sette upon, keep your point short, that your enemie may not finde it with his, and look that you be readie with your hand, and if he make such a false proffer as I spake of before, you being in the same ward & in proportion, may with great readines put a stoccata to his face, shifting sodainly with your left foot, being a little folowed with the right, and that sodainly your Rapier hand be drawen backe. But if he should give a stoccata to your face with ful force from your rapier side outward, you may a litle shrink with your bodie & beat his point with your hand outward from your right side toward your weapon, & withall you may strike a riversa. Furthermore, if he should pul his rapier within at the same instant, to be more sure, you must carrie your right foot a little aside toward his left hand, and with great readines of countertime you must put a thrust or stoccata to his face, turning your hand most nimbly. So also in such like assalts if your enemie shuld come to strike down right blows or riversi, do as I have told you before, in moving your hand with great readinesse, and finding your time and proportion. Wherefore I hold this Ward to bee verie good, as well to assaile, as for to tarrie and watch for an advauntage. And you must especially take heede that you put not your selfe in danger, because if your enemy should finde you without your sword at length, beeing nimble & strong, striking upon your weapon, he might make a passage with greate speede, and make himselfe master as well of you as of your weapon, and put you in daunger of your life. Whereas contrary-wise, when you doo holde your Rapier shorte, as I have tolde

you, and that your pointe is towards his face, you make him afraide, especially when hee comes forward with his hand and bodie to finde your weapon with his, he must needes come so farre that you maye easily hurt him without being hurt. Besides all this, if your enemy should come to deliver a stoccata, imbroccata, mandritta, or riversa, you have great advauntage, for hee cannot so readily strike, nor with such suretie as you may.

L. But I pray you tel me this, if mine enemy should charge me with his weapon at length, as putting forth halfe his weapon in his ward, must I answere him with the like?

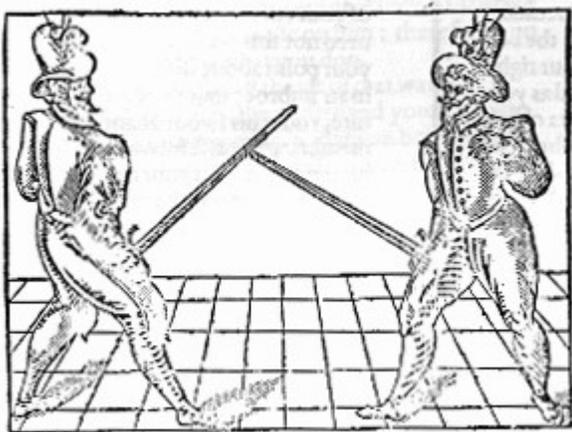
V. This warde truely is verie good against all other wards in my opinion, especially if you knewe howe to charge your enemy, & to find time & proportion to strike knowing how to turne and shift your bodie as well on the one side as the other, and understanding the skill of fight, and beeing most nimble, you may aunswere him with it. But yet I would have you to marke and consider well in what sorte your enemy behaveth himselfe, and howe hee holdeth the pointe of his weapon: if that you finde him holding his pointe alofte, that it bee above yours, when that you holde it right against his face, you must seeke to winne grounde a little with your right foote before you remooove, and your hande must be nimble and readie, & at that verie instant make three times with your feet at once, moving a little with your right foot, a little with your left, and againe a little with your right. But this must proceed from very great skill and knowledge, for if your left foot tarrie behind, he may give you a pricke in the face or in the belly, or a cut upon the legges. Wherefore you must so come forward with your right foot at once, that you may have the weapon of your enemy with your hand, and your point towards his belly. So that as you see, many & verie many things may be performed by this ward, if, as I have sayd, one be skilfull and nimble. But this I would advise you, when you would make these passages, or put your weapon under your enemies, that you doe them not in vaine nor without some advauntage. There are many which oftentimes by chance and hap, doe many things in fight, of which if a man shoulde aske them a reason, they themselves know not how they have done them. And sometimes men verie sufficient and skilfull at their weapon, are hurt, either by their evill fortune, that they suffer themselves to bee carried awaie and overmastered too much with choler and rage, or else for that they make no account of their enemy. Wherefore as well in this ward as in the other, take heede that you suffer not your selfe to bee blinded and carried awaie with rage and furie.

L. I perceive verie well that the secrets of this noble arte are verie great, & that with great travell and paines a man must come to the knowledge and skill both to rightly understande and practise it, for otherwise I see, that by verie small errorr a man comes in daunger of his life. But I praie you instruct me somewhat farther, as if at this present I were to undertake a combat with some valiaunt man in defence of my credite and my lyfe.

V. In truth the secretes which are in like fightes are such, that unlesse one have a skilfull man in this science to instruct him, and that loves him, he shall never come to the right understanding of them. There are manye which will thinke they knowe inough, but most commonly are deceived; and others there are which the master or teacher loves, and shewes them faithfullie all that he can, and yet they can never come to anie greate matter in this science, but they who are framed of nature as it were, both in respect of abilities of bodie and minde fit to learne this arte, if they use the help of a skilfull teacher, come to great perfection. And these abilities are the gifts of God and nature, wherefore as in others, so in this worthie arte you shall finde some more apt than others, and especially to give a right thrust or stoccata, which is the chiefest matter of all. For all the skil of this art in effect, is nothing but a stoccata: wherefore if you shall have occasion to fight, I could wish you to practise this short ward, and to stand sure upon it, & to seeke your advauntage with time, which when you have found, give the stoccata withall, somewhat moving your right foot, and at the same instant draw back your left, & let your rapier with your bodie shift upon the left side, because if your enemy be cunning, he may sodainly aunswere you with a thrust, and beate aside your weapon, and therefore if you minde, to give a right stoccata, there is no other waie to save your selfe from harme. But if your enemy bee cunning and skilfull, never stand about giving any foine or imbroccata, but this thrust or stoccata alone, neither it, also, unlesse you be sure to hit him: suffer your enemy to doo what he list, onely stand you upon a sure ward, and when you finde opportunitie and time, deliver the stoccata, and shift with your foot. And this also you must marke, that sometimes it is good to give the stoccata to the right side, which must bee doone when your enemies right foot is over against yours, and sometimes to the lefte side. Wherefore when you will deliver a stoccata to the right side, see that you go not aside with your foot, but give the thrust, and then shifte backward with your left foot, as also when you deliver your stoccata to the left side, you must shift aside with your right foot. These things must be knowen & much practised. But if your enemy use a mandritta or riversa, you have had instructions already how to behave your selfe. There are many other secrets of this ward which cannot be written nor be made plaine or sufficiently expressed to bee understoode. And that it is so, many Gentlemen can witness, who

although they had seene me doo, yet coulde neither understand nor practise them untill that I shewed them the waie, and then with much adoo and verie hardly. Therefore I thinke I have spoken inough concerning this ward: and if you can perfourme all that I have tolde you, it will suffice, & this our discourse may pleasure many, which take delight to understand and learne these things: but if they will repaire to the teachers of the arte, they shal better and more fully understand and conceive of all, because both knowledge and practise is required.

L. I would thinke my selfe happie, Master Vincent, if I coulde remember and perfourme all which you so courteously have imparted unto mee of the former fight, and as farre as I maie, I wyll doo my diligence to practise that which you have taught, but having found you thus friendlie and readie to shew me what favour you may, I am emboldned to trouble you farther, and your curtesie hath increased my longing & desire to know more in this matter, and therefore I praie you make me understand the other kind of fight which heretofore you have tolde me of, and you call it Punta reversa.



V. I have already shewed you of that importance & profit the two former wardes are, as well for exercise of plaie, as for combat & fight, if a man will understand & practise them. Now also perceiving you so desirous to go forward, I will not faile in anie part to make you understand the excellencie of this third warde, which notwithstanding is quite contrarie to the other two. Because that in this you must stand with your feet even together, as if you were readie to sit down, and your rapier hand must bee within your knee, and your point against the face of your enemie: and if your enemie put himselfe upon the same ward, you may give a stoccata at length betweene his rapier and his arme, which shall bee best performed & reach farthest, if you shift with your foot on the right side. Moreover, if you would deliver a long stoccata, and have percieved that your enemie would shrinke awaie, you may, if you list, at that

verie instant give it him, or remove with your right foot a little back toward his left side, and bearing backe your bodie, that his point may misse your bellie, you maie presentlie hit him on the brest with your hand or on the face a riverso, or on the legs: but if your enemy would at that time free his point to give you and imbroccata, you may turn your bodie upon your right knee, so that the said knee bend toward the right side, & shifting with your body a little, keepe your left hand ready upon a soddaine to finde the weapon of your enemy, and by this meanes you may give him a punta riversa a stoccata, or a riversa, to his legs. But to perform these maters, you must be nimble of body & much practised: for although a man have the skill, & understand the whole circumstance of this play, yet if he have not taken paines to get an use and readines therein by exercise, (as in all other artes the speculation without practise is imperfect) so in this, when he commeth to performance, hee shall perceive his want, and put his life in hazard and jeopardie.

L. But tell me I pray you, if my enemy should firste strike at me, how may I defend my selfe?

V. If your enemy be first to strike at you, and if at that instant you would make him a passata or remove, it behoveth you to be very ready with your feet and hand, and beeing to passe or enter, you muste take heede when hee offereth a stoccata, that you doo not put it aside with your weapon, because if hee should finde you in good time and measure, you could not so readilye put it by, as hee should be readye to give it you. But when that hee offereth the saide stoccata, be readye to turne the knuckle of your hand toward your right side, and let your point be right upon the bellie of your enemy, and let your left foote accompanie it in such sorte, that the pointe thereof be against the right foot of your enemy, and let your right foot follow the left, that the middest thereof be straight against the heele of your left, the one being distant from the other, halfe a pace, that you may stand more sure upon your feete, and be more redy to perform al things which shal be required.

L. But tell me I praie you, whether this warde may serve me to any other purpose, then for this stoccata

V. If you minde to deliver a stoccata like to the before mentioned, you must win ground with your right foot, toward the right side of your enemy, and as you finde the time and measure, give him a stoccata either in the belly or in the face, and if your enemy shrink at that time that you deliver your stoccata, it stands upon you to be most readye and nimble, shifting with your bodie and weapon, and somewhat with your right foote, a little aside towards the right side of your enemy, turning readilie your bodie and knee upon your right side,

so that your enemie himselfe shal come with his bodie upon your pointe, and the more furious he commeth, the greater danger shall he incurre, because he cannot helpe nor recover himselfe. But remember to thrust alwaies at the face, if you may, for therby you shall better save your selfe, and have the greater advantage. Moreover, if your enemie should make a false proffer, or deliver a little stoccata, to the ende to procure you to answere him, that presently hee might make you a passata or remove, if you be in good proportion and measure, if he thrust at you, answere him, and if you will you may give it him full and home, or somewhat scant and with great agilitie, whilst he maketh his passata or remove, turn readie your bodie with your knee, but yet upon the right side, and take heede you shift not with your feete at this time, but onelie turne your bodie, as I ahve tolde you, otherwise you should be in danger of your life, how little soever you shrinke backe: and therefore I advise you to beware that you goe not beyonde that which I have taught you. Moreover, if you can win ground on the right side of your enemie, and become master of his sword, you need not thrust a stoccata, but rather passe on him with your point above his sword, turning wel your hand as in an imbrocata, or else give him a stoccata by a fincture, under his swoord hand, which is sooner done, remembering to passe forward with your left foot toward his right, and so let your right foot follow your left: but beward in any case that you never passe directly upon your enemy, for endangering your life. If your adversary thrust directly to your face within measure, answer him with a stoccata, in the same time that he lifteth up his hande, but if you bee out of distance, answere not, for then you put your selfe in danger. And when your enemie offereth a stramazone or back blowe, receive it on your sword very readilie, turning your pointe, and passing speedly with your left legge, as before taught: but if he make a punta riversa, breake it with your lefte hand toward your right side, and give him another: and if he use any fincture or false thrust, answer him not. Now if your enemie hold his sword out at length, and you perceive his point to be anie whit without your bodie, especially on the left side, you must charge him, being readie with your lefte hand, so that finding his point any whit high, you shal falsefie with your sword hand under his Swoorde, passing forward with your lefte foote in the same instant, still following your enemie without retiring, for so you shall be commaunder of his Swoord, and may use him at your pleasure: but remember to be very redy, for you must make but on time, & take good heed that you stand not stil in doing this, for so, if your adversary have any skil, he may greatly annoy you, either with thrustes or blowes. And oftentimes your enemy will give such advantage of purpose to have you passe on him: therefore you must well understand what you doo.

L. I praie you is this all the use of that ward?

V. When you perfectlie understand your weapons, it maie serve you otherwise, so that you hold not your sword hand within your knee, for if you finde youremie to beare his sword long, being in distance, you maie sodenlie beat it aside with your sword, and withall give him a stoccata in the bellie, which must bee done all in one time, speedilie turning your bodie on the right side, or else retyring with your right foote toward the right side of youremie: otherwise, if you stand upon it, as manie doo, you might much endanger your selfe thereby, for if your adversarie being furious, should passe on you in the same time, hee might put your life in jeopardie: but by the agilitie of the bodie, it is easilie to be avoided: and againe, when you finde his point long, you maie breake it aside with your swoorde, and give him a Stramazone, or a riversa to the head, but with readines of the bodie, or you maie thrust a stoccata, either to the bellie or face: and if youremie offer to breake it with his swoorde, and if he breake it above, falsefie againe underneath his swoorde, or if you be readie with foote and bodie, you maie passe on him whilst he breaketh your fincture with his sword, fastning y our left hand on the hiltes of his sword, and you maie give him a stoccata, either direct, or with a rinersa: but looke that you laie not holde of his arme, for if youremie perceive it, hee maie change his Rapier sodainly into his other hand, & so have you at a great advantage, & therefore I teach you to laie hold on the hilts, because you have then commanded his sword surely: and if youremie finding your point out at length, would beat it aside with his rapier, to passe uppon you, retire your lefte foote a little backward, and with greate promptnesse in the same instant, falsifie with a riversa either to the face or bellye, of which kinde of thrusts you shall often have use, but you must be verie readie and well practised therein therefore you must labour it, that when occasion require you may performe it.