

The Art of Fencing Reduced to an Abridged Methodology

Written by Jean de Brye in 1721

Dedicated to Monseigneur the Marshall Duke de Villeroy

By J. de Brye, Master of Arms

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**To Monseigneur the Marshall Duke de Villeroy, guardian of
France, Gouverneur of the King; knight of the realm.**

**Governor of Lyon and the provinces of Lyon, Forest and
Beaujolais, Minister of State, King's counsel, Chief of Trade
and Commerce &c.**

Preface

Monseigneur,

This fencing text is a homage to the dignity of the first marshall of France, and the liberty which I dare to take in dedicating to your grandeur, in the same way as was permitted when the honour was given to me of choosing me as master of arms for Monseigneur's children.

This small work contains the principles of an Art equally useful to the nobility in serving the state and their king, and necessary for certain people to defend and save their honour and their life: These are the observations I have made of 40 years of observation and work which I shall try to put in to an understandable order, both simple and intuitive.

However I assume fortunately, Monseigneur, that my respectable zeal is agreeable to you, and of some utility for prince's use when God and yourself are roused in times of a troubled France. Might also these exercises equally be used by august Bisaieul, and may your grandeur enjoy long years for long years of practice to consolidate their practice to the prince for great lessons which you have inspired for the benefit of your subjects; all of which will bring greetings from all Frenchmen and for all life.

Monseigneur,

Your, ever-humble, ever-obedient, and ever obliging servant,

De Brye

Although it is impossible to arrive at perfection in the Art of fencing, and have the possession of the other practical Sciences, without securing a good master, and without great practice: it is however very useful that there are methods based upon Science and the Arts, in which is recorded in an instinctive order the principles and rules.

Experience demonstrates this truth, while making one see that the default of good masters is one of the principle causes which deprive the young of the fruits which can be gained from their studies and their practice; because people ignore that the good of the state depends in part upon the wisdom and the capacity of the subjects who comprise it. Parents desire ardently the elevation and perfection of their children. Every man naturally loves truth; even children are susceptible to this. What is the cause of this lack of education? Where does the greater part of young folk feel such difficulty in self-expression while leaving colleges and academies? And why are they embarrassed to give reasons for what they have learned? I do not see any other cause among those of good birth and good willing, than the small exercise of their reason. They acted without reflection; the principles which they received were made to escape their memories without having been judged; those to whom this has not happened have the best method, which are always very useful for students for their instruction and very commodious for masters to teach.

A good method is a set of principles and set-out rules in an instinctive order and clear and easy manner. It is a tableau which brings together in one point of view of all that is most essential and most interesting in the Art; in a word a good method is the fruit of life-long experience, and it is this that encourages the great masters to engage in making one; but unfortunately they do not leave it in writing, their knowledge leaves with him and the public become the victim of the little experience of the young masters who succeed them.

I will not finish, if you wish to report here all the advantages of a good method. Can someone, if he reflects upon it, not sense the utility? There are those who try to understand Science and Arts, who clear the path and make the paths accessible; without these the young folk will not be in a state to question the usefulness, and the more experimental masters will not have the occasion to be elucidated with solid and profound responses.

Finally the daily disputes of masters upon their manner of teaching, expounding again a sensible proof of the great utility of their methods, then they will finish all their differences by an exact understanding when they are given that which is true and beautiful, and by natural order by which they connect their principles.

It seems to me that for all these reasons that the necessity of these methods is fairly well established; but there is some advantage when one can fence with the practical Sciences, good masters and practice both contribute to its acquisition. Thus it is very important to have a correct idea of the qualities of an excellent master, as this is a choice which demands perfection.

An excellent master is judged by the Science and his character; he possesses his Art in all his intentions, and the order in which he puts his ideas and in his principles should be instinctive, which are always prepared and given with reason, and spoken with great certainty and ease: his interest is in the long-term view, and the progress of his students whom he must hold as dear as his reputation.

Always occupied with their advancement, he studies their nature and their character, and then takes the very best means to make them succeed; he does not change the order of his principles. But he is ingenious in their presentation and in giving them in the most intelligent form and the easiest way to retain them; he ensures from time to time his students' capacity by asking useful questions and he makes it a pleasure to elucidate their doubts and to put aside their difficulties; he observes to always be very

decisive and precise in his explanations, and wisely seeks the good in his students in their vain satisfaction to make a scientific parry which will not leave them confused, seeking by experience that the instructions are not worthless but however they are proportionate to the time and intelligence of those are in a fit state to make their correct application. Thus he waits without impatience to speak with them very wisely, and to give his students the latest idea of perfection.

These are a few of the qualities which one desires in a master. I suggest that the method of fencing which I present in public will prepare them with some utility, and to a lesser extent it can exhort my colleagues to do their best, as they will be persuaded by my own experience as the fruit of my fencing.

One should not think that one must accompany this little work with images, because they would be of too great a number, and they will be afraid (there is some expense to having them done, and some care must be taken to have them done well) that the postures will always be done imperfectly, if they do not have a master of the Art capable of showing them to them well.

The Art of Fencing reduced to an abridged method

Aim of the Art

The Art of fencing is very useful and very necessary when it comes to protecting life and honour, and it contributes to the perfection of the body.

Advantages

Well taught this Art strengthens the body, gives it freedom, skill, deportment and ease; it makes one aware of balance; and in a word, it gives a greater knowledge of the beauty of one's movements and a facility in their performance: Thus, it is surprising when one is neglectful of these great advantages and thus we want to spent only a little time in gaining them.

Decadence

The Nobility formerly had a taste for this exercise, they had raised it to the highest point of perfection; their indifference has let it fall. It is thus with all of Science and the Arts; however, no matter how neglected they are, they are no less significant in themselves, and their merit is no less diminished.

Author's Intention

This reflection carries naturally men to leave for posterity a natural body of work on the principles of Art and Science in which they have excelled: thus before we have many examples; but it seems to me that we do not have enough and I must revive the best in order to walk in their footsteps, from which I will venture to give the principal traits of an Art whose great beauty lies in the execution.

Why We Need a Master

In effect, all of the demonstrations which one can put down on paper will only give, even in exquisite detail, the weakest idea of the Art which must be learned in person from a good master, and using practical examples; thus all that can be said in this little tract, it must be regarded as a summary and a typical containing

of the masters and their previous experience, demonstrated; and so to speak in order, I think it is very useful to give definitions and the divisions of this exercise.

Definition of the Art

The Art of fencing is a methodical arrangement of certain principles and rules, on the means by which one can certainly strike one's enemy, and be sure to hit.

Divisions

It is easy to see that this definition comprises of offence and defence, and as a consequence both of these are most essential parts of the Art, which can be divided into four parts; viz,

The simple game

The combination game

How to parry and thrust at the wall
and the assault

Knowledge of the first two is acquired on the plastron.

The third is the exact repetition and reflection of the first two.

And the fourth is the use and judicious application of all the principles of the Art.

First Part

The Simple Game

This first part consists of knowing the simple actions, and the foundations of fencing, in which the first lessons consist more of reasoning than of execution, as in a natural order must always be preceded and accompanied with knowledge, as without this is to act riskily and without principles. One must have certain rules, and it is the exact observation of these rules which distinguish the grand masters from those who only act routinely.

Origin of the Term “Fencing”

It is thus understandable that those scholars who began being instructed in, this manner of speaking, “fencing”, as thrusting with the sword came to be called. They must then be very attentive to the method in which they are taught to take a hold, and to remember that everything is important in the study of arms, and that every effort must be made towards perfection.

The Parts of the Sword

Taking a good grip on the sword, they will learn that the blade has four parts, *the strong, the half-strong; the weak, the half-weak*: that it has two edges that customarily only used for appels, or engagements, beats on the sword, and parades, and that there are 5 different orientations of the edge which are termed *Prime, Seconde, Tierce, Quarte* and *Quinte*, which serve to explain the different orientations of the sword in the guards and in the *Estocade*.

Then the instruction passes on to the method of best putting oneself on guard, which is of very great consequence; since it is the first method of judging by eye the ability of the master and thus is a favourable warning sign for the pupil.

What it Means to be On Guard

To be on guard well, one must seek good grace and assuredness; and to achieve this, one must place both feet, both haunches, both shoulders, the right arm and the sword on the same line, the heel of the right foot relative to the ankle of the left foot; the sword oriented to Tierce, the pommel at thigh height, the point at that of the shoulder, the left hand at eye-height, while forming a semi-circle; the left knee bent, the right held so as to be free and flexible. Finally the body must be upright, in strength and in freedom, equally applied over both legs, in such a way that one could show balance with a perpendicular line drawn from the top of the head to the middle of the ground between both feet.

Thus are the principle rules which one must observe to be well on guard; but, to make this posture with all perfection, it must be the good taste of the master that adds the finishing touch, and also that the docility and the attention of the pupil is disposed to exhibit through his actions the nobility and the graces which are noticeable in those persons who are called “beautiful with a sword in hand”.

Salute at Arms

When it is polite to salute the master who they, and the people with whom you practice, either pushing at the wall, or in the assault, it is necessary to learn how to make the greeting, which one must always seek to do, with all the actions of this exercise having good grace and freedom, which augments strength, and produces deportment, ease and speed. All of these qualities are acquired from the method in which excellent masters make them move; one can be assured that one will never attain skill at fencing, if one ignores or if one departs from their principles.

Direct Thrust or Estocade While Stood Still

The following first lesson teaches them to thrust direct, that is to say throw an *estocade while stood still*, and without *disengaging*. The estocade has different names, depending upon the edge of the sword, and which side it is thrust at.

Names of Different Thrusts.

Method of Thrusting the Estocade

The principal of these are: high Quarte, low Quarte, Seconde over the arm and Seconde under the arm: thus a master must teach how to begin and how to finish these thrusts; and when I say that, in order to succeed, he must know *Measure*, that the hand must leave first, that the action of the left knee must make a straight line, that the left foot must stay firmly on the ground, and that it must be laid down; when in high Quarte, and in Seconde over the arm, the strong of the sword must be opposed; when in low Quarte, Seconde under the arm, and other thrusts where the strong is not opposed, the flexibility of the body must be in evidence; this description, is all I could add regarding the perfection to the posture and the most beautiful execution of the thrusts, may be of some use to those who have not seen the actions demonstrated. Do not establish as a general rule, of all the methods of thrusting an estocade, I shall list three: viz, stood still, in tempo and at the same tempo.

Why There is no Thrust of Tierce

I have come to name the thrust which is ordinarily named Tierce Seconde over the arm: and this is how I determined this and how I found this naming to be more appropriate.

The masters are in agreement upon the demonstration of this action, that the only difference is the name: it is thus a question of naming, which is made easy to decide, if one wants to make a fair reflection upon the names of Prime, Seconde, Tierce, Quarte and Quinte, drawing their origins, as I said before, from the five different orientations of the edge of the sword: because in the orientation named Tierce, the strong of the sword is not opposed: however all masters are agreed that the strong must be opposed in the action which is commonly named Tierce: there is thus an error in the name; which I am ready to demonstrate.

And since there is no point in prescribing against the truth, it would be stubborn of me to resist doing so here. It is true that true love, respect for antiquity, force of habit and education give us vivid impressions, such that we do not seek to abandon these ancient opinions out of a type of generosity; but fortunately in this occasion we need not make great sacrifices since there is only one name which has been misused.

Simple Thrusts and Disengages

After this little digression, which I felt necessary, I shall return to the lessons which teach the simple thrusts and disengages. They are no different from straight thrusts other than for the disengagement, of which it is important to have the correct idea, since a great part of their beautiful execution depends having a good understanding of the movements.

What is the Disengagement

A disengagement is the passing of the sword point to the other side of that of the enemy; but to do it well, one must have a great delicacy of the wrist which the master alone can sense and observe to use in the semi-circle which forms this action, in as little space as possible, since the Art of fencing is in the Science of the line, skill, ability be consistent in preserving it, and to profit from the play which one engages in order to move away from it.

One again learns in the course of the first lessons how to step and parry with the strong of the sword.

Of the Parade

This parade is a unique method of defence, consists of turning the enemy's sword off line with the body with a small movement of the wrist inside, or outside the weapon, without raising or lowering it. Everything is important in this action: thus one must seek to take great care to understand it well, and in learning its execution.

Stepping

One steps with large and small paces: masters teach to step to the front to enter into measure, and backwards to break it, and to jump to make a retreat. All of these actions, except large steps which must be done with such connection and subtlety, must be ready to be done in a single tempo, which is in reality two.

They must also be executed on the same line, in the same way that the sword point never departs from the centre of the body so that the thrusts can land: but to acquire this correctness, one must stay with the principles of this first part, which contains, as I have said, the foundations of this practice, without which one cannot hope to achieve perfection.

Second Part

The Combined Game

The lessons of the first part place the student in a state of readiness to perform with grace the simple actions; but these are not sufficient to vanquish an enemy who is well covered with his sword, or to attack with certainty those who use many tricks without care in the thrust, nor worry about taking a hit.

One thus needs a new methods for combatting such adversaries: these are found in the *combined game*, which confirms without contradiction the Art of arms, and the most beautiful understanding of this Art, since it contains all the means imaginable to disorder, attack and batter the enemy, some game and some postures which can be used to attack, and for your defence: it is also the combined game which gives understanding to each method of passing, seizing the sword, fooling measure, breaking measure with a bend of the body, and what to do against left-handers. In a word, the combined game can be regarded as the source of the Science of arms.

Feints

The actions most used to disorder an adversary, and to oblige him to expose himself, are the appels of the fixed foot, or engagements of the sword, feints, and half-blows, which others call half-thrusts or gaining the sword: Some others add double-appels, and double-feints of the fixed foot in measure: but these sort of attacks are dangerous, and must not be used except against those people who lack speed, and who do not know how to profit from these double actions.

I shall not speak here of how to execute these actions, nor of everything that can be done to oppose them as a defence, because they can only be understood from practical demonstration by a master; but I will reflect on the set of actions of which there is a lot of ignorant understanding, when it comes to the reasoning of arms: I have however a great esteem for masters for not being persuaded to teach their pupils the reasons for this set of actions: but at the same time one cannot help but think that pupils will profit a little from the enlightenment they will receive, and nothing is more common than seeing routine fencing, not excepting those who have some reputation among connoisseurs.

Advice to Pupils on the Combined Game

It is here that there is a fault made by pupils, and it is one which one must pay great attention to. It is that when their masters make them make a first action to disorder the enemy they do not take care as to when the second action is executed, showing no regard for the consequences of the enemy's reaction to the first action; as such they reckon that the two actions must be executed immediately, such that their use is often useless, sometimes even exposing; and when they are used again, it has a risky result contrary to reason, which must therefore be the guide in all actions.

These will examples will clarify this fully. Suppose that the master tells the pupil to engage his sword in Quarte, and to thrust in the same line, the master will not lack in trying to do something against the pupil, this means that the second action must do something when he feels the sword soften upon the first action, so that, having turned the enemy's sword in line with the body, it is reasonable to thrust where one wishes to play; but if the pupil does not reflect upon this warning, and if he has not noticed that the master has not parried the first action, imagining that the two actions must always be done together, he will make a mistake, and gain a bad habit, because the same pupil will make the same two actions in the assault when the adversary goes to parry in the first instance, not only will the second be useless, but the enemy will find him exposed, striking without doubt, and having profited from the advantage. He must, thus, use the second action, as the pupil has sensed the resistance of the first action, to thrust *Seconde* over the arm: because in this way he will strike home, and do so without running any risk.

One can have many other oppositions to the same thrust, and from these methods of attack and defence. For example, if the enemy is in place to go for a parry on the first action, having regained the sword with a disengagement, he must thrust while making a double engagement; if he has refused the sword, he must thrust over the arm; if he has thrust in tempo he must thrust during a counter-time; if he has parried the weak of the sword he will be able to thrust over the point, or make some other convenient action.

I could make the same reflections on all the first actions in use to confuse the enemy, such as feints, gaining the sword, and others: but I think that examples that I give are sufficient to establish a general maxim, that the second action can only be made on condition of, and as a consequence of the opposition that the enemy will make upon the first action: because the second action cannot be made until after the opposition.

When the oppositions are different, as I am going to show: it is thus without doubt, and demonstrated that the second action must not be, and that it is a dangerous error to make these two actions without understanding and without having regard for the opposition that the enemy made first, which will determine the second.

Practical demonstration and opinions that the masters give to their pupils on all the actions of the second part, it relieves me to say, do not contradict these ideas.

I wish only in finishing that the amateurs of this exercise carefully be convinced of the importance and the veracity of the maxim which I have proposed, and that they remain persuaded when working without reasoning, and do not acquire a strong habit which is a long way off from perfection.

Third Part

How to Parry, and Thrust at the Wall

What it is to Thrust and Parry at the Wall

This third part, as I have said, is an exact repeat and reflection of the first two: but, to render this repetition complete the presence of a master is necessary in the beginning, and the pupil must give him his full attention; because if in this repetition one picks up bad habits they will carry over to the assault, and the lessons which were taking against the plastron will be useless.

Important Advice for Pupils

To make exact repetitions it is good to be convinced of several things, that one's natural inclination while thrusting at the wall is a great obstacle to the beauty of its execution, that speed does not lead to greater acquisition, and that the worst practice is when one uses force, all of which renders the actions limited and disagreeable: thus it is in the good spirit of the occasion to set aside this inclination, and to consider that when one sets aside the rules, one sets aside perfection.

After this necessary notice one must observe,

1-If one takes up the sword, one must take care to defend according to all the rules of the Art

2-After having saluted the person against whom you will push, one must see that one is on measure to thrust. Experienced people may judge this by eye: but, to ease the understanding of pupils who have not done much, one can give as a rule (assuming foils of equal length) that one is in measure when stood still when the weak of the sword of he who is to push engages the half-strong of he who must parry; and to thrust, when the weak of he who pushes, touches the weak of the sword of his adversary.

What it is to be in Measure

Advice on how to thrust

Once measure is known one must thrust simple attacks with the same deportment as on the plastron, and bring to mind the excellent maxim that good grace and nobility in arms consists of offering up only those postures, perfectly done, which one can stop, and to whatever side is considered.

Feints

One can again, after having given warning, make all sorts of feints at the wall; and one must seek, as in all the actions of this exercise, good grace and freedom.

Repetitions of Parades

Circular Parries

It is of no less importance to make repetitions of the parades, which are of very great consequence, and one cannot be too well trained in them, since all defence relies absolutely upon the parade.

It will be thus useful to parry all sorts of people, and the various ways they want to thrust, even all kinds of feints, and while disengaging. It will be useless for me to want to explain that which comprises perfection in parades, and their different uses; since without demonstration by a master, one will never attain good understanding, much less how to execute them.

Fourth and Final Part Of the Assault

There is No Secret Thrust

A pupil disposed, clarified and fortified in the first three part of this practice will bring about victory in the fourth, if he makes a judicious application of the principles he has received, and if he follows exactly the last advice which I am about to give him.

But he must think like a commoner that there is a secret thrust reserved for masters. It is a popular misconception from which he must deliver himself, and to demonstrate it, it is enough to say that there are in arms as many methods to defend oneself, than there are methods to attack, and that superiority and certainty are only products of speed, and by the means of taking tempo, it is these which make up an incontestable principle, that *a tempo well taken, has no counter* as the speed of the hand, as the correct taking of tempo cannot be acquired except by an understanding of the principles and by long practice, it is thus reasonable to conclude that the Art of arms contains no secret.

This well established maxim must be made clear to pupils that it is necessary to practice, and to exactly observe the rules of the Art, principally when in the assault; where they are abandoned by them, and thus are unsafe: it is why they must not engage in this activity except when the master considered it acceptable, and after they have been equipped with every technique within their capability.

Definition of the Assault

That the Art of Fencing is Not Infallible in its Execution

The assault is a representation of a combat between two adversaries, in which the better tactics and the better practiced will be shown to be the victor: it is vanity to object that it reduces the value of the Art, as the more experienced are sometimes vanquished by oafs since this triumph only comes about by accident and circumstances which are not allowed by those accustomed to using the rules of the Art; thus, as one can reasonably conclude from these examples, the Art of fencing is not absolutely infallible in its execution: but it remains ever-constant in its perfection of Nature, and gives great advantage, and this cannot be denied, without giving up all sense, and the bright light of reason.

Two Important Pieces of Advice on the Assault

Since it is in the latter part as to how to apply all these rules in offence and defence, that is to say, putting the pupils in a position to become masters and to possess perfection in the Art; one must warn them that they can never reach it, but that they are resolving to inviolably observe two fundamental points, which are: holding up the body, in such a way that they are total masters of all of their movements; and judgement, using their head, so that nothing is left to chance, and everything is done with purpose.

Third Piece of Advice

One can also add, as a piece of advice, that it is good if they engage in the assault, in the beginning, against people who have a consistent game, and are about their strength: in effect, if they are put against superior people they run the risk of being put off, and they will be too awkward if they play against people who have an unusual game and guard. However it would be very useful to assault against adversaries of greater strength, provided that they are advised that it is only for their education, and use a method appropriate to their capacity.

Division of the Assault

This latter instruction is clearly known when one must use ranks in the assault, and one can as a consequence split them between three classes, as an understanding of the three degrees of understanding and experience the pupils will acquire in this exercise.

1st Type of Assault

The first assault will be done against adversaries who have a weak and inconsistent game

2nd Type of Assault

The second against more able and more consistent

3rd Assault

And the third, the most telling and most difficult of all, against those with an irregular and unusual game, who are upset that the pupils have come to triumph over them, deserving the just title and name of master, and can be considered to have acquired the highest point of the perfection in the Art of fencing

That the Description of Assaults hereafter are Not an Arbitrary Supposition

It is so as to give a facility in techniques that I have given a succinct and abridged idea of the three types of assault as it is not possible, nor even necessary, to list here the different methods of defending and attacking, which depend upon an infinity of circumstances and the occasion in which one must know what to do to in order to profit.

This is why one need not regard the following three little assaults as a supposition which must done in different ways; they prove the intention of the Art, the necessity of long practice, and a prompt and certain judgement in order to make a just application of all the principles.

First Assault

Advice on the First Assault

Before beginning the assault it is useful to know, however possible, the adversary's degree of skill, to consider the terrain, the division of skill and the equality of weapons.

Then, having finished the formalities at a reasonable distance, they must approach the adversary with a small step, well covered with the sword, in a noble manner, without fear and presumption, while observing exactly the point of his sword, his guard and the advanced part, so as to thrust when one would wish to.

1st Example in the Assault

If the adversary goes to parry, one must withdraw the sword well ahead to parry the riposte, and attack to the other side; and if one wishes to continue with a good parry, he must make a retreat, while jumping backward, to consider a new method of attack: because the assault is perpetual reasoning, one must not use up tempo and strength by thrusting uselessly.

If the adversary is well-guarded one must use skill to oblige him to expose himself, either by feints, or some other method of disordering him, while observing exactly, as I have said in the second part, the enemy's opposition upon this first action, then to take neat advantage of it with the second, which is what is called "using you head" and take the most certain path to hitting him.

Thus, supposing one engages the adversary's sword in Quarte, if he does not go to parry, he must, if one senses a soft sword, push an estocade in the same line: but if the adversary has made a parry upon the first action he will try to push Seconde over the arm, and redouble in Prime over the arm, then beat the adversary's sword over the weapon while jumping backwards to make a retreat, and thus putting oneself in a state to recommence a new method of attack, though it is natural to think that the enemy will not be surprised by the same actions again: besides this exercise is so extensive that the pupils will not want for resources, so that they can profit from the enlightenment and knowledge that their masters have given them in the different methods of attack and defence, such as I recount here, so as to bring them the right applications.

2nd Example of the 1st Assault

Our combatants, having saluted, and withdrawn by a half-step or thereabouts, one of them two makes a double appel outside, and inside the weapon, to see what action it will produce: if he is not disordered he will jump back so as to engage on the follow-up, and in the tempo that he advances upon him, he will pass his sword in Seconde.

If on the other hand he does not advance he makes an appel, so as to oblige a thrust in tempo to take the counter, then he will retreat out of measure, not having the certainty to remain in measure against an enemy who he knows, and who he knows will profit from this.

Also I think that in an affair between such adversaries, the most certain does not make such appels, feints or other movements to disorder the enemy in measure while stood still, except on those occasions where they make a feint formed by the hand outside the weapon, without tapping the foot, because it gives away the game a little.

2nd Example

Both adversaries approach each other into a reasonable measure; if one of them enters with a sword in *Seconde*, the other takes the tempo, while making a double disengagement, and thrusting *Quarte*; if the first remains, the second makes an *appel*, and if he sees that the enemy is not disordered, enters measure, while trumping the left foot, and pushing in *Quarte* while stood still, then he breaks measure with his body, ready to riposte the enemy while disengaging over the weapon, redoubles in second under the arm, and seizes the sword of his adversary in case he has advanced while readying, or after he has received it; unless he retires out of measure, so as to return to the measure from where he came, where he also makes a tentative *appel*, then to take the tempo in which he will enter measure: if the enemy remains, he withdraws a small step, and sees what occurs, he stops while making a play with an open *appel* to the inside, holding the sword in *Quarte*.

Then if the thrusts in tempo, he takes the counter, if he thrust a *flanconnade*, he parries, and returns in the same line.

If the enemy engages the sword in *Quarte*, the other thrusts while disengaging in *Seconde* over the arm, redoubles in *Prime* under the arm, and jumps backwards to regain his breath, and consider a new means of attack, which are inexhaustible, and which the pupils are well instructed, I think that it will be useless to give multiple examples, and to differentiate from this their idea of the third assault, which is more awkward than the second (which is often executed against oafs) as a result of unusual guards, which better deserve the name “postures”, and the irregular manner of pushing: all that’s left to say is that there is nothing more difficult than the beat from an oaf.

Third Assault

1st Type of Assailant with an Unusual Guard

The adversaries of the third assault, are of two types; those who act without thinking, and are not guided by the sole movements of nature are called the “Vigorous Oaf”.

2nd Type

The others have an understanding and practice but have not learned other methods of going on guard other than those attitudes and postures; or rather they do not affect to use these irregular stances, only the most awkward; but when the pupils come to the third assault they are instructed in every method of the most able defence and attack, it is not a question here of making use of the lessons that the masters have given them to combat these unusual guards, thus it is required to consider examples of the principals.

Portrait of the 1st Type

The first of these presents himself with an arm stuck straight out, with a little flex and movement in the elbow, sword in Prime, flashing the tip with a small circular movement, body advanced to the right side, head covered by the right arm and sword, left hand opposite at the height of the elbow of the right arm.

Advice for Conquering Assailants of the 1st Type

The most certain way of vanquishing an adversary of this type is to gain measure, beat and chase his sword inside the arm, while turning the hand to high Quarte, point low, and pushing at him in Quinte inside the arm on the second tempo. There is peril in all methods of attacking him.

Portrait of the 2nd Type

The second guard or unusual posture is those in the face of the enemy carry their right side, the right arm a little withdrawn to the rear, in such a way that the right hand is found placed about four fingers above the right thigh, the sword situated in Quarte, and the left hand opposed to parry, and ready to riposte while slashing at every blow which is pushed against them.

Method to Conquer Assailants of the 2nd Type

Here is the best means to combat such adversaries.

One must, while on guard about one half-foot from measure, make a direct feint in Quarte inside the arm, between the hand and the sword while entering into measure, and in the tempo that the enemy goes to parry with the left hand, disengage in second underneath the hand, body lowered to the fore to avoid by bending the enemy's blow which will pass over your shoulder, and pass the left foot, to seize his sword and stop him continuing to thrust, it is only by seizing his sword that you will be capable of stopping him.

3rd Type and Portrait of Assailants

One can also add to these two types the "mangled" guards of the following two, which though they are more erratic, are hardly any more difficult to combat, and they are encountered fairly often.

Advice to Conquer Them

The first consists of holding the arm outstretched, the hand in Quarte a little lower than the shoulder.

The method that guarantees with advantage is to cross the sword, hand in second, wrist high and point low; using this crossing, turn the enemy's sword from the line of his body, which will keep you from receiving it in turn, raise or lower the hand, or disengage well from Quarte over the arm, which one parries while disengaging.

The second is different from the others, in that the hand is in Quarte, the tip strong and low.

To combat it with success, one makes an appel inside the arm in the same line that one wants the adversary to respond, while thrusting Quarte high: when the assailant goes low, hand in Quarte, body strong and lowered: if on the contrary the adversary does not respond to the appel, the assailant beats his sword in low Seconde, and thrust Seconde over the arm.

Observations on Left-handers who have No Advantage over Right-handers

One learns other awkward games by experiencing them by which time the pupils will be capable of making their own judgement: it is however good to observe, while coming to the end of awkward games, on the advantage that left-handers have over right-handers is nothing founded in nature; but the true cause of superiority is that left-handers are always with right-handers, and the opposite is very rare for the former, which is the cause of their awkwardness and a surprise which gives all advantage to the left-handers, who themselves are very awkward if they are obliged to enter an assault against other left-handers, which conform the truth of the reason which I have just described of their advantage over right-handers.

After this observation, I think it better to finish this little tract which was named in a spirit of an abridged and concise method of all that is important in this exercise and in each of these parts.

Double Skill in the Art of Fencing

On proposes in this agreeable and useful Art: the use is found in the means which give defence to honour and life, and triumph over enemies. The agreeableness consists in the perfection which is gives the body in fortifying it and giving grace to every movement.

Summary and Conclusion of the Whole Work

In effect the lessons of the first part of this exercise teach how to better go on guard, and the right way to move, in what way to feel and understand balance: balance produces freedom which strengthens the body and gives it speed, ease, deportment; and all these qualities together form the graces which one must try to put into every action.

The second part is the source of the Science of arms, since they give understanding to each method of attack and defence against more able and more awkward adversaries.

The third part is an exact repetition and review of the lessons received against the plastron in the first two parts, and beginning to judge, by the paying of attention and the care that the pupil gives to the third part, the neatness of their spirit the progress that they are making in the exercise.

Then the fourth and final part made it come to fruition and the recompense one can hope to gain from the Art, in a method proportionate to the judicious application of the principles in action. I put these in the most natural order that I could. It is reserved for masters to explain and make their uses known through practical demonstration.

The End