

BRIEF INSTRUCTIONS UPON MY PARADOXES OF DEFENCE

by George Silver Gentleman [1599] [Sloan MS. No. 376]

for the true handling of all manner of weapons together with the four grounds and the four governors which governors are left out in my paradoxes without the knowledge of which no man may fight safe.

TO THE READER For as much as in my Paradoxes of Defence I have admonished men to take head of false teachers of defence, yet once again in these my brief instructions I do the like, because divers have written books treating of the noble science of defence, wherein they rather teach offence than defence, rather showing men thereby how to be slain than to defend themselves from the danger of their enemies, as we may daily see to the great grief and overthrow of many brave gentlemen and gallant(s) of our ever victorious nation of Great Britain, and therefore for the great love and care that I have for the well doing and preservation (?) of my countrymen, seeing their daily ruin and utter overthrow and utter overthrow of the diverse gallant gentlemen and others which trust only to that imperfect fight of that rapier, yes (?) although they daily see their own overthrow and slaughter thereby, yet because they are trained up therein, they think and do fully persuade themselves that there is no fight so excellent and where as among diverse other opinions that leads them to these errors one of that chiefest is, because there is so many slain with these weapons and therefore they hold them so excellent, but these things do chiefly happen, first because their fight is imperfect for that they use neither the perfect grounds of true fight, neither yet the four governors without which no man can fight safe, neither do they use such other rules which are required in the right use of perfect defence, and also their weapons for the most part being of an imperfect length, must of necessity make an imperfect defence because they cannot use them in due time and place, for had these valorous minded men the right perfection of the true fight with the short sword and also of other weapons of perfect length, I know that men would come safer out of the field from such bloody bankets(?) and that such would be their perfections here in that it would save many hundreds (of) men's lives. But how should men learn perfection out of such rules as nothing else but very imperfection itself? And as it is not fit for a man which desires the clear light of the day to go down into the bottom of a deep and dark dungeon, believing to find it there, so is it as impossible for men to find perfect knowledge of this noble science where as in all their teachings every thing is attempted and acted upon imperfect rules, for there is but one truth in all things, which I wish very heartily were taught and practiced here among us, and that those imperfect and murderous kind of false fights might be by them abolished. Leave now to quaff and gulp no longer of that filthy and brine-ish puddle, seeing you may now drink of that fresh and clear spring.

O that men for their defence would but give their mind to practice the true fight indeed and learn to bear true British wards for their defence, which if they had it in perfect practice, I speak it of my own knowledge that those imperfect Italian devices with rapier and poniard would be clean cast aside and of no account of all such as blind affections do not lead beyond the bounds of reason. Therefore for the very zealous and unfeigned love

that I bear unto your high and royal person my countrymen pitying their causes that so may brave men should be daily murdered and spoiled for want of true knowledge of this noble science and as some imagine to be, only the excellence of the rapier fight, and where as my paradoxes of defence is to the most sort as a dark riddle in many things therein set down, therefore I have now this second time taken pains to write these few brief instructions there upon whereby they may better attain to the truth of this science and laying open here all such things as was something intricate for them to understand in my paradoxes and therefore that i have the full perfection and knowledge of the perfect use of all manner of weapons, it does embolden me here to write for the better instruction of the unskilled

And I have added to these my brief instructions certain necessary admonitions which I wish every man not only to know but also to observe and follow, chiefly all such as a desirous to enter into the right usage and knowledge of their weapons and also I have thought it good to annex here unto my paradoxes of defence because in these my brief instructions, I have referred the reader to divers rules therein set down.

This I have written for an infallible truth and a note of remembrance to our gallant gentlemen & others of our brave minded nation of Great Britain, which here be minded to defend themselves and to win honor in the field by their actions of arms and single combats.

And know that I write not this for vainglory, but out of an entire love that I owe unto my native countrymen, as one who laments their losses, sorry that so great an error should be so carefully nourished as a serpent in their bosoms to their utter confusion, as of long time have been seen, whereas they would but seek the truth here in they were easily abolished, therefore follow the truth and fly ignorance.

And consider that learning has no greater enemy than ignorance, neither can the unskillful ever judge the truth of my art to them unknown, beware of rash judgement and accept my labors thankfully as I bestow them willingly, censure me justly, let no man despise my work herein casually(?), and so i refer myself to the censure of such as are skillful herein and I commit you to the perfection of the almighty Jehovah.

Yours in all love and friendly affection

George Silver

ADMONITIONS to the gentlemen and brave gallants of Great Britain against quarrels and brawls written by George Silver, Gentleman

Whereas I have declared in my paradoxes of defence of the false teaching of the noble science of defence used here by the Italian fencers willing men therein to take heed how they trusted there unto sufficient reasons and proofs why.

And whereas there was a book written by Vincentio an Italian teacher whose ill using practices and unskillful teaching were such that it has cost the lives of many of our brave gentlemen and gallants, the uncertainty of whose false teaching does yet remain to the daily murdering and overthrow of many, for he and the rest of them did not teach defence but offence, as it does plainly appear by those that follow the same imperfect fight according to their teaching or instructions by the orders from them proceeding, for be the actors that follow them never so perfect or skillful therein one or both of them are either sore hurt or slain in their encounters and fights, and if they allege that we use it not rightly according to the perfection thereof, and therefore cannot defend ourselves, to which I answer if themselves had any perfection therein, and that their teaching had been a truth, themselves would not have been beaten and slain in their fights, and using of their weapons, as they were.

And therefore I prove where a man by their teaching can not be safe in his defence following their own ground of fight then is their teaching offence and not defence, for in true fight against the best no hurt can be done. And if both have the full perfection of true fight, then the one will not be able to hurt the other at what perfect weapon so ever.

For it cannot be said that if a man go to the field and cannot be sure to defend himself in fight and to come safe home, if God be not against him whether he fight with a man of skill or no skill it may not be said that such a man is master of the noble science of defence, or that he has the perfection of the true fight, for if both have the perfection of their weapons, if by any device, one should be able to hurt the other, there were no perfection in the fight of weapons, and this firmly hold in your mind for a general rule, to be the hayth(?) and perfection of the true handling of all manner of weapons.

And also whereas that said Vincentio in that same book has written discourses of honor and honorable quarrels, making many reasons to prove means and ways to enter the field and combat, both for the lie and other disgraces, all which diabolical devices tends only to villainy and destruction as hurting, maiming and murdering or killing. Animating the minds of young gentlemen and gallants to follow those rules to maintain their honors and credits, but the end thereof for the most part is either killing or hanging or both to the utter undoing and great grief of themselves and their friends, but then to late to call it again. They consider not the time and place that we live in, nor do not thoroughly look into the danger of the law 'til it be too late, and for that in divers other countries in these things they have a larger scope than we have in these our days.

Therefore it behoves us not upon every abuse offered whereby our blood shall be inflamed, or our choler kindled, presently with the sword or with the stab, or by force of arms to seek revenge, which is the proper nature of wild beasts in their rage so to do, being void of the use of reason, which thing should not be in men of discretion so much to degenerate (denigrate), but he that will not endure an injury, but will seek revenge, then he ought to do it by civil order and proof, by good and wholesome laws, which are ordained for such causes, which is a thing far more fit and requisite in a place of so civil a government as we live in, then is the other, and who so follow these my admonitions shall

be accounted as valiant a man as he that fights and far wiser. For I see no reason why a man should adventure his life and estate upon every trifle, but should rather put up divers abuses offered unto him, because it is agreeable to the laws of God and our country.

Why should not words be answered with words again, but if a man by his enemy be charged with blows then may he lawfully seek the best means to defend himself and in such a case I hold it fit to use his skill and to show his force by his deeds, yet so, that his dealing be not with full rigor to the others confusion if possible it may be eschewed.

Also take heed how you appoint the field with your enemy publicly because our laws do not permit it, neither appoint to meet him in private sort lest you wounding him he accuse you of felony saying you have robbed him, etc.. Or he may lay company close to murder you and then report he did it himself valiantly in the field.

Also take heed if your enemy's stratagems, lest he find means to make you look a side upon something, or cause you to show whether you have on a privy coat, and so when you look from him, he hurt or kill you.

Take not arms upon every light occasion, let not one friend upon a word or trifle violate another but let each man zealously embrace friendship, and in turn not familiarity into strangeness, kindness into malice, nor love into hatred, nourish not these strange and unnatural alterations.

Do not wickedly resolve one to seek to the other's overthrow, do not confirm to end your malice by fight because for the most part it ends by death.

Consider when these things were most used in former ages they fought not so much by envy the ruin and destruction one of another, they never took trial by sword but in the defence of innocence to maintain blotless honor.

Do not upon every trifle make an action of revenge or of defence.

Go not into the field with your friend at his entreaty to take his part but first know the manner of the quarrel how justly or unjustly it grew, and do not therein maintain wrong against right, but examine the cause of the controversy, and if there be reason for his rage to lead him to that mortal resolution.

Yet be the cause never so just, go not with him neither further nor suffer him to fight if possible it may be by any means to be otherwise ended and will him not to enter into so dangerous an action, but leave it until necessity requires it.

And this I hold to be the best course for it is foolishness and endless trouble to cast a stone at every dog that barks at you. This noble science is not to cause one man to abuse another injuriously but to use it in their necessities to defend them in just causes and to maintain their honor and credits.

Therefore fly all rashness, pride and doing of injury all foul faults and errors herein, presume not upon this, and thereby to think it lawful to offer injury to any, think not yourself invincible, but consider that often a very wretch has killed a tall(?) man, but he that has humanity, the more skillful he is in this noble science, the more humble, modest and virtuous he should show himself both in speech and action, no liar, no vaunter nor quarreller, for these are the causes of wounds, dishonor and death.

If you talk with great men of honorable quality with such chief have regrade to frame your speeches and answers so reverently, that a foolish work, or forward answer give no occasion of offence for often they breed deadly hatred, cruel murders and extreme ruin etc..

Ever shun all occasions of quarrels, but marshall men chiefly generals and great commanders should be excellent skillful in the noble science of defence, thereby to be able to answer quarrels, combats and challenges in defence of their prince and country.

VALE

Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence for the true handling of all manner of weapons together with the four grounds and the four governors which governors are left out in my paradoxes without the knowledge of which no man can fight safe.

Cap. I.

The four grounds or principals of that true fight at all manner of weapons are these four, viz. 1. judgement, 2. distance, 3. time, 4. place.

The reason whereof these 4 grounds or principals be the first and chief, are the following, because through judgement, you keep your distance, through distance you take your time, through time you safely win or gain the place of your adversary, the place being won or gained you have time safely either to strike, thrust, ward, close, grip, slip or go back, in which time your enemy is disappointed to hurt you, or to defend himself, by reason that he has lost his place, the reason that he has lost his true place is by the length of time through the numbering of his feet, to which he is out of necessity driven to that will be agent.

The 4 governors are those that follow

1. The first governor is judgement which is to know when your adversary can reach you, and when not, and when you can do the like to him, and to know by the goodness or badness of his lying, what he can do, and when and how he can perform it.
2. The second governor is measure. Measure is the better to know how to make your space true to defend yourself, or to offend your enemy.
3. The third and forth governors are a twofold mind when you press in on your enemy, for as you have a mind to go forward, so

4. must you have at that instant a mind to fly backward upon any action that shall be offered or done by your adversary.

Certain general rules which must be observed in that perfect use of all kind of weapons.

Cap. 2

1. First when you come into the field to encounter with your enemy, observe well the scope, evenness and unevenness of your ground, put yourself in readiness with your weapon, before your enemy comes within distance, set the sun in his face traverse if possible if possible you can still remembering your governors.

2. Let all your lying be such as shall best like yourself, ever considering out what fight your enemy charges you, but be sure to keep your distance, so that neither head, arms, hands, body, nor legs be within his reach, but that he must first of necessity put in his foot¹ or feet, at which time you have the choice of 3 actions by which you may endanger him & go free yourself.

1. The first is to strike or thrust at him, the instant when he has gained you the place by his coming in.²

2. The second is to ward, & after to strike him or thrust from it, remembering your governors

3. The third is to slip a little back & to strike or thrust after him.

But ever remember that in the first motion of your adversary towards you, that you slide a little back so shall you be prepared in due time to perform any of the 3 actions aforesaid by disappointing him of his true place whereby you shall safely defend yourself & endanger him.

Remember also that if through fear or policy, he strike or thrust short, & therewith go back, or not go back, follow him upon your twofold governors, so shall your ward & slip be performed in like manner as before, & you yourself still be safe.

Keep your distance & suffer not your adversary to win or gain the place³ of you, for if he shall so do, he may endanger to hurt or kill you.

Know that the place is, when one may strike or thrust home without putting in of his foot.

It may be objected against this last ground, that men do often strike & thrust at the half sword & the same is perfectly defended, where to I answer that the defence is perfectly

¹"put in his foot," i.e. advance

²"His coming in." It must be remembered that in Silver's time the lunge was unknown, at least to English fencers & the only movements of the feet were "passes" and "traverses" which with "slips" constituted a great part of the defence as well as of the attack. "Passes" were either forwards or backwards and the "traverses" were steps in a lateral direction. "Slips" were little short steps either lateral or backwards. These movements were also much used in feints of attack.

³"To win or gain the place;" i.e. to come within striking distance.

made by reason that the warder has true space before the striker or thruster is in force or entered into his action. Therefore always do prevent both blow & thrust, the blow by true space⁴, & the thrust by narrow space that is true crossing it before the same come in to their full force, otherwise the hand of the agent being as swift as the hand of the patient, the hand of the agent being the first mover, must of necessity strike or thrust that part of the patient which shall be struck or thrust at because the time of the hand to the time of the hand, being of like swiftness the first mover has the advantage.

4. When your enemy shall press upon you, he will be open in one place or other, both at single & double weapon, or at least he will be to weak in his ward upon such pressing, then strike or thrust at such open or weakest part that you shall find nearest.

5. When you attempt to win the place, do it upon guard, remembering your governors, but when he presses upon you & gains you the place, then strike or thrust at him in his coming in.⁵

Or if he shall strike or thrust at you, then ward it & strike or thrust at him from your ward⁶, & fly back instantly according to your governors, so shall you escape safely, for that first motion of the feet backward is more swift, than the first motion of the feet forward, where by your regression will be more swift, than his course in progression to annoy you, the reason is, that in the first motion of his progression his number & weight is greater than yours are, in your first motion of your regression, nevertheless all men know that the continual course of the feet forward is more swift than the continual course of the feet backwards.

6. If your enemy lies in the variable fight, & strikes or thrusts at you then be sure to keep your distance & strike⁷ or thrust at such open part of him as are nearest unto you, at the hand, arm, head or leg of him, & go back with all.

7. If 2 men fight at the variable fight, & if within distance, they must both be hurt, for in such fight they cannot make a true cross, not have time truly to judge, by reason that the swift motion of the hand, being a swifter mover, then the eye deceives the eye, at what weapon soever you shall fight withal, as in my paradoxes of defence in the --- chapter thereof does appear.

8. Look to the grip⁸ of your enemy, & upon his slip take such ward as shall best fit your hand, from which ward strike or thrust, still remembering your governors.

⁴"Space" is the distance which the sword blade has to traverse in changing from one position to another: thus from "medium" to "quarte" or "tierce" would be a "narrow space" while from "tierce" to "septime" or from "seconde" to "quarte" would be a very "wide space"

⁵A time hit or thrust

⁶Parry and reponse. Silver is very careful to emphasize the necessity of "flying back," i.e. getting away immediately after an attack, whether it be successful or otherwise.

⁷Time hits & thrusts

⁸The "grip" is the seizing of the sword hilt with the left hand - for this purpose a "quanto da presa" or gripping gauntlet with the palm protected with fine mail, was sometimes used.

9. If you can indirect⁹ your enemy at any kind of weapon, then you have the advantage, because he must move his feet to direct himself again, & you in the mean time may strike or thrust at him, & fly out safe, before he can offer anything at you, his time will be so long.

10. When you shall ward blow & thrust, made at your right or left part, with any kind of weapon, remember to draw your hind foot a little circularly¹⁰, from that part to which the same shall be made, whereby you shall stand the more apt to strike or thrust from it.

A declaration of all the 4 general fights to be used with the sword at double or single, long or short, & with certain particular rules to them annexed.

Cap. 3.

1. Open fight¹¹ is to carry your hand and hilt aloft above your head, either with point upright, or point backward, which is best, yet use that, which you shall find most apt, to strike, thrust, or ward.

2. Guardant fight¹² in general is of 2 sorts, the first is true guardant fight¹³, which is either perfect or imperfect.

The perfect is to carry your hand & hilt above your head with your point down towards your left knee, with your sword blade somewhat near your body, not bearing out your point but rather declining it a little towards your said knee, that your enemy cross not your point & so hurt you, stand bolt upright in his fight, & if he offers to press in then bear your head & body a little backward.

The imperfect is when you bear your hand & sword hilt perfect high above your head, as aforesaid, but leaning or stooping forward with your body & thereby your space will be wide on both sides to defend the blow struck at the left side of your head or too wide to defend a thrust from the right side of the body.

Also it is imperfect, if you bear your hand & hilt as aforesaid, bearing your point too fat out from your knee, so that your enemy may cross, or strike aside your point, & thereby endanger you. The second is the bastard guardant¹⁴ fight which is to carry your hand & hilt below your head, breast high or lower with your point downward toward your left

⁹To "indirect" is to either maneuver or force him from the true line or direction

¹⁰a demi-volte

¹¹The "Guardia alta" of Marozzo & "Terza guardia" of Viggiani

¹²A "hanging" guard.

¹³"True guardant" is high prime.

¹⁴"Bastard guardant" is a kind of high seconde, but more central.

foot, this bastard guardant ward is not to be used in a fight, except it be to cross your enemy's ward at his coming in to take the grip of him or such advantage, as in divers places of the sword fight is set forth.

3. Close fight is when you cross at the half sword either above at the forehand ward¹⁵ that is with the point high, & hand & hilt low, or at the true or bastard guardant ward with both your points down.

4. Close is all manner of fights wherein you have made a true cross at the half sword with your space very narrow & not true cross is also close fight.

Variable fight is all other manner of lying not here before spoken of, whereof these 4 that follow are the chiefest of them.¹⁶

(1) Stocata¹⁷: which is to lie with your right leg forward, with your sword or rapier hilt back on the outside of your right thigh with your point forward to ward your enemy, with your dagger in your hand extending your hand towards the point of your rapier, holding your dagger with the point upright with marrow space between your rapier blade, & the nails of your dagger hand, keeping your rapier point back behind your dagger hand if possible.

Or he may lie wide under his dagger with his rapier point down towards his enemy's foot, or with his point forward with out his dagger.

(2) Imbrocata¹⁸: is to lie with your hilt higher than your head, bearing your knuckles upward, & your point depending toward your enemy's face or breast.

(3) Mountanta¹⁹: is to carry your rapier pommel in the palm of your hand resting it on your little finger with your hand below & so mounting it up a loft, & so to come in with a thrust upon your enemy's face or breast, as of out of the Imbrocata.

(4) Passata: is either to pass with the Stocata, or to carry your sword or rapier hilt by your right flank, with your point directly against your enemy's belly, with your left foot forward, extending forth your dagger forward as you do your sword, with (a) narrow space between your sword & dagger blade, & so make your passage upon him.

Also any other kind of variable fight or lying whatsoever a man can devise not here expressed, is contained under this fight.

¹⁵"Forehand ward" is a medium guard.

¹⁶The Italian terms were imperfectly understood in England at the end of the XVI century, & Silver has misconstrued them.

¹⁷"Qunita guardia" of Capo Ferro.

¹⁸"Prima guardia" of Capo Ferro, "Guardia alta" of Alferi, & "Guardia di becca possa" of Marozzo.

¹⁹"Quarta guardia: of Alferi.

*Of the short single sword fight²⁰ against
the like weapon.
Cap. 4.*

1. If your enemy lie aloft²¹, either in the open or true guardant fight, & then strike at the left side of your head or body your best ward to defend yourself, is to bear it with true guardant ward, & if he strike & come in to the close, or to take the grip of you, you may then safely take the grip of him as it appears in the chapter on the grip.
2. But if he does strike & not come in, then instantly upon your ward, uncross & strike him²² either on the right or left side of the head, & fly out²³ instantly.
3. If you bear this with forehand ward, be sure to ward his blow, or keep your distance, otherwise he shall deceive with every false, still endangering your head, face, hand, arms, body, & bending knee, with blow or thrust. Therefore keep well your distance, because you can very hardly discern (being within distance), by which side of your sword he will strike, nor at which of those parts aforesaid, because of the swift motion of the hand deceives the eye.
4. If he lies aloft²⁴ & strike as aforesaid at your head, you may endanger him if you thrust at his hand, or arm, turning your knuckles downward²⁵, but fly backward with all in the instant you thrust.
5. If he lies a loft as aforesaid, & strike a loft at the left side of your head, if you will ward his blow with forehand ward, then be sure to keep your distance, except he (be)comes so certain that you (are) sure to ward his blow, at which time if he comes in withal, you may endanger him from that ward, either by blow thrust or grip²⁶.
6. If he lies aloft & you lie low with your sword in the variable fight, then if you offer to ward his blow made at your head, with true guardant ward your time will be too long due in time to make a sure ward, so that it is better to bear it with the forehand ward, but be sure to keep your distance, to make him come in with his feet, whereby his time will be too long to do what he intended.
7. If 2 men fight both upon open fight, he that first breaks his distance, if he attempts to strike the other's head, shall be surely struck on the head himself, if the patient agent strike there at his coming in²⁷, & slip a little back withal, for that sliding back makes an

²⁰The "short single sword fight" was a fight with a one-hand sword, and without the assistance of a defensive weapon in the left hand. The "sword double" is any kind of single-hand sword assisted by a defensive weapon in the other.

²¹A high prime

²²A direct "riposte."

²³"Fly out" suggests a lateral movement of the feet, but also might mean a backward one.

²⁴A familiar guard is favored among modern Austrian saber players.

²⁵A time thrust in "quarte" at the sword hand.

²⁶A "quarte" parry, followed by "reposte" or "grip"

²⁷A time hit with "opposition"

indirection, whereby your blow crosses his head, & makes a true ward for your own, this will that be, because the length of time in his coming in.

8. Also if 2 fight upon open fight, it is better for the patient to strike home strongly at the agent's head, when the said agent shall press upon him to win the place than to thrust, because the blow of the patient is not only hurtful to the agent, but also makes a true cross to defend his own head.

9. If he charge you aloft, out of the open or true guardant fight, if you answer him with the imperfect guardant fight, with your body leaning forward, your space will be too wide on both sides to make a true ward in due time, & your arm and body will be too near unto him, so that with the bending of the body with the time of hand & foot, he may take the grip of you.

But if you stand upright in true guardant fight, then he cannot reach to take the grip of you, nor otherwise to offend you if you keep your distance, without putting in of his foot or feet wherein his number will be too great²⁸, & so his time will be too long, & you in that time may by putting in of your body take the grip of him, if he press to come in with using only your hand, or hand or foot, & there upon you may strike or thrust with your sword & fly out withal according to your governors, see more of this, in the chapter of the grip.

10. If he will still press forcibly a loft upon you, charging you out of the open fight or the true guardant fight, intending to hurt you in the face or head, or to take the grip of you, against such a one, you must use both guardant & open fight, whereby upon every blow or thrust that he shall make at you, you may from your wards, strike or thrust him on the face, head, or body as it appears more art large in the 5th chapter of these my instructions.

11. If you fight with one standing only upon his guardant fight²⁹ or if he seeks to come in to you by the same fight, then do you strike & thrust continually at all manner of open places that shall cone nearest unto you, still remembering your governors, so shall he continually be in danger, & often wounded, & wearied in that kind of fight, & you shall be safe, the reason is, he is a certain mark to you, & you are an uncertain mark to him.

And further because he ties himself into one kind of fight only, he shall be wearied for want of change of lying, & you by reason of many changes shall not only fight at ease, & much more brave, but you have likewise 4 fights to his one, to wit, guardant, open, closed and variable fight, to his guardant only, therefore that fight only is not to be stood upon or used.

12. But if all this will not serve & although he has received many wounds, will continually run to come in, & forcibly break your distance, then may you safely take the grip of him, & hurt him at your pleasure with your sword, as appears in the chapter of the grip, & he can neither hurt nor take the grip of you, because the number of his feet are too many, to bring his hand in place in due time, for such a one ever gives you the place,

²⁸"Number will be too great," i.e. will have to make too many steps or passes.

²⁹A variety of guard to be used to prevent fatigue.

therefore be sure to take your time therein.

In the like sort may you do at sword & dagger, or sword & buckler, at such time as I say, that you may take the grip at the single sword fight, you may then instead of the grip, soundly strike him with your buckler on the head or stab him with your dagger & instantly either strike up his heels or fly out, & as he likes a cooling card to his hot brain, sick fit, so let him come for another ³⁰.

If 2 fight & both lie upon the true guardant fight & that one of them will need seek to win the half sword by pressing in, that may you safely do, for upon that fight the half sword may safely be won, but he that first comes in must first go out, & that presently, otherwise his guard will be too wide above to defend his head, or if fit for that defence, then will it be too wide underneath to defend that thrust from his body which things the patient agent ³¹may do, & fly out safe, & that agent cannot avoid it, because the moving of his feet makes his ward unequal to defend both parts in due time, but the one or the other will be deceived & in danger, for he being agent upon his first entrance his time (by reason of the number of his feet) will be too long, so that the patient agent may first enter into his action, & the agent must be forced (to be) an after doer, & therefore cannot avoid this offense aforesaid.

14. If he come in to encounter the close & grip upon the bastard guardant ward, then you may cross his blade with yours upon the like guardant ward also, & as he comes in with his feet & have gained you he place, you may presently uncross & strike him a blow on the head, & fly out instantly, wherein he cannot offend you by reason of his lost time, nor defend himself upon the uncrossing, because his space is too wide whereby his time will be too long in due time to prevent your blow, this may you do safely.

15. If he comes in upon the bastard guardant ward, bearing his hilt lower than his head, or but breast high or lower, then strike him soundly on the head which thing you may easily do, because his space is too wide in due time o ward the same.

16. If your enemy charge you upon his Stocata fight, you may lie variable with large distance & uncertainty with your sword & body at your pleasure, yet so you may strike, thrust or ward, & go forth & back as occasion is, to take the advantage of this coming in, whether he does it out of the Stocata, or Passata, which advantage you shall sure to have, if you observe this rule & be not too rash in your actions, by reason that the number of his feet will be great³², & also because when those 2 fights are met together, it is hard to make a true cross, therefore without large distance be kept (between) them, commonly they are both hurt or slain, because in narrow distance their hands have free course & are not tied to the time of the foot, by which swift motion of the hand the eye is deceived, as you may read more at large in the --- chapter of my paradoxes of defence.

³⁰In "Sword and Buckler" or "Sword and Dagger" fighting, strike with the defensive weapon instead of gripping, and trip up his heels. Lonergan 1771

³¹The "patient agent" is the man who stands upon the defensive, the "agent" being the one who attacks.

³²"The number of his feet will be too great"-i.e. he will have to make too many slips or "passes"

You may also use this fight, against the long sword, or long rapier, single or double.

Upon this ground some shallow witted fellow may say, if the patient must keep large distance, then he must be driven to go back still, to which I answer that in the continual motion & traverses of his ground he is to traverse circularly, forewards, backwards, upon the right hand, & upon the left hand³³, the which traverses are a certainty to be used within himself, & not to be prevented by the agent, because the agent comes one upon a certain mark, for when he thinks to be sure of his purpose, he patient is sometimes on the one side, & sometimes on the other side, sometimes too far back, & sometimes too near, so still the agent must use the number of his feet which will be too long to answer the hand of the patient agent, & it cannot be denied but (that) the patient agent by reason of his large distance, still sees what the agent does in his coming (in), but the agent cannot see what the other (will) do, 'til the patient agent be into his action, therefore too late for him either to hurt the patient, or in due time to defend himself, because he entered into his action upon the knowledge of the patient, be he knows not what the patient agent will do 'til it is to late.

17. If the agent says that then he will stand fast upon sure guard and sometimes moving * traversing his ground, & keep large distance as the patient does, tp which I answer, that when 2 men shall meet that have both the perfection of their weapons, against the best no hurt can be done, otherwise if by any device one should be able to hurt the other, then were there (?) no perfection in the use of weapons, this perfection of fight being observed, prevents both (the) close fight, & all manner of closes, grips & wrestling & all manner of such devices whatsoever.

18. Also if charges you upon his Stocata, or any other lying after that fashion, with his point low & large paced, then lie you aloft with your hand & hilt above your head, either true guardant, or upon the open fight, then he cannot reach you if you keep your distance without putting in his foot or feet, but you may reach him with the time of your hand, or with the time of your hand & body, or of the hand, body & foot, because he has already put in his body within your reach & has gained you the place, & you are at liberty & (outside) his reach, 'til he puts in his foot or feet, which time is too wide in that place to make a ward in due time to defend his head, arms & hand, one of which will be always within your reach.

Note still in this that your weapons be both short and of equal & convenient length of the short sword.

19. If out of this variable fight he strikes at the right or left side of the head or body, then your best ward is to bear with the forehand ward³⁴, otherwise your space will be too wide & too far to make your ward in due time.

³³This is exactly the traverse recommended by Roworth

³⁴Parries of "tierce" and of "quarte."

20. If he lies variable after the manner of the Passata then if you lie aloft as is above said, you have the advantage, because he that lies variable cannot reach home, at head, hand or arm, without putting in his foot or feet, & therefore it cannot be denied, but that he that plays aloft, has still the time of the hand to the time of the foot, which fight being truly handled is (of) invincible advantage.

21. If he lies variable upon the Imbrocata, then make a narrow space with your point upward, & suddenly if you can cross his point with your blade, put aside his point strongly with your sword & strike or thrust at him, & fly out instantly, ever remembering your governors that he deceive you not in taking his point.

22. If he strike or thrust at your leg or lower part out of any fight, he shall not be able to reach the same unless you stand large paced with bending knee³⁵, or unless he comes in with his foot or feet, the which if he shall so do, then you may strike or thrust at his arm or upper part for then he puts them into the place gaining you the place whereby you make strike home upon him & he cannot reach you.³⁶

But if he stands large paced with bending knee, then win the place & strike home freely at his knee, & fly back therewith.

23. If he comes to the close fight with you & that you are both crossed aloft at the half sword with both your points upward, then if he comes in withal in his crossing bear strongly your hand & hilt over his wrist³⁷, close by his hilt, putting in over at the backside of his hand & hilt pressing down his hand & hilt strongly, in your entering in, & so thrust your hilt in his face, or strike him upon the head with your sword, & strike up his heels, & fly out.³⁸

24. If you are so crosses at the bastard guardant ward, & if he then presses in, then take the grip of him as is shown in the chapter of the grip.

Or with your left hand or arm, strike his sword blade strongly & suddenly toward your left side by which means you are uncrossed³⁹, & he is discovered, then may you thrust him in the body with your sword & fly out instantly, which thing cannot be avoided, neither can he offend you.

Or being so crossed, you may suddenly uncross & strike him upon the head & fly out instantly which thing you may safely do & go out free.⁴⁰

25. If you be both crossed at the half sword with his point up & your point down in

³⁵From this it appears that in Silver's time the knees were very little bent.

³⁶A time hit or thrust at the arm or upper part.

³⁷Forcible pressure in "tierce" at "half-sword."

³⁸Recommended also by Lonergan, 1771

³⁹Beating the sword away with the gantleted left hand.

⁴⁰An alternative

the true guardant ward, then if he presses to come in, then either take the grip of him, as in the chapter of the grip, or with your left and or arm, strike out his sword blade towards your left side as aforesaid, & so you may thrust him in the body with your sword & fly out instantly.⁴¹

26. Do you never attempt to close or come to grip at these weapons unless it be upon the slow motion or disorder of your enemy,

But if he will close with you, then you may take the grip of him safely at his coming in⁴², for he that first by strong pressing in the adventure the close looses it, & is in great danger, by reason that the number of his feet are too great, whereby his time will be too long, in due time to answer the hand of the patient agent, as in the chapter of the grip does plainly appear.

27. Always remembering if you fight upon the variable fight that you ward upon the forehand ward, otherwise your space will be too wide in due time to make a true guardant ward, to defend yourself.

28. If you fight upon (the) open fight, or true guardant fight, never ward upon (the) forehand ward for then your space will be too wide also, in due time to make a sure ward.

29. If he lies aloft with his point towards you, after the manner of the Imbrocata, then make your space narrow with your point, & strike or thrust as aforesaid but be sure herein to keep your distance, that he deceive you not in(to) taking of his point.

*Of diverse advantages that you may take by striking
from your ward at the sword fight.*⁴³

Cap. 5.

1. If Your enemy strikes at the right side of your head, you lying (in the) true guardant ward, then put your hilt a little down, mounting your point, so that your blade may cross across your face⁴⁴, so shall you make a true ward for the right side of your head, from which ward you may instantly strike him on the right or left side of the head, or turn down your point, & thrust him in the body, or you may strike him on the left side of the body, or on the outside of his left thigh.

Or you may strike him on the outside of the right thigh, one of those he cannot avoid if he (does not) fly back instantly upon his blow, because he knows not which of these the patient agent will do.

⁴¹Again the alternative of "gripping" and beating the sword off.

⁴²When he closes, "grip" him.

⁴³"Parrying" and "Reposting"

⁴⁴A parry of "high tierce" with its ripostes.

2. If you lie upon your true guardant ward, & he strikes at the left side of your head⁴⁵, you have the choice from your ward to strike him from it, on the right side or left side of the head, or to turn down your point, & thrust him in the body, or you may strike him on the outside of the right or left thigh, for the reason above said in the last rule, except (that) he flies out instantly upon his blow.

3. If he charge you upon the open or the true guardant fight, if you will answer him with the like, then keep your distance, & let your gathering be always in your fight to ward his right side so shall you with your sword choke up any blow that he can make at you, from the which ward you may strike him on the right or left side of the head, or thrust him in the body.

But if he thrust at your face or body, then you may out of your guardant fight break it downward with your sword bearing your point strongly towards your right side⁴⁶, from the which breaking of his thrust you may likewise strike him from the right or left side of the head, or thrust him in the body.

4. If you meet with one that cannot strike from his ward, upon such a one you may both double & false (feint)⁴⁷ & so deceive him, but if he is skillful you must not do so, because he will be still so uncertain in his traverse that he will still prevent you of time & place, so that when you think to double & feint, you shall gain him the place & there upon he will be before you in his action, & your coming he will still endanger you.

5. If you fight upon the variable fight, & that you receive a blow with (the) forehand ward, made at the right side of your head or body⁴⁸, you have the choice of 8 offensive actions from that ward, the first to strike him on the right side, either on the head, shoulder, or thigh, or to thrust him in the body, or to strike him on the left side either on the head, shoulder or thigh, or to thrust him in the body, the like you may do if he strike ever at your left side, as is above said, if you bear it with your forehand ward.⁴⁹

6. In this forehand ward, keep your distance, & take heed that he deceives you not with the downright blow at your head out of his open fight, for being within distance the swift motion of the hand may deceive your eye, because you know not by which side of your sword his blow will come.

7. Also see that he deceive you not upon any false offering to strike at the one side, & then thereby you have turned your point aside, then to strike on the other side, but if you keep distance you are free from that, therefore still in all your actions remember your governors.

⁴⁵A parry of "prime" with its ripostes.

⁴⁶A thrust parried with the "seconde," and its repostes.

⁴⁷To "double" = to "remise." To "false" = to "feint."

⁴⁸A parry of "tierce" with its repostes.

⁴⁹A parry of "quarte."

8. If he will do nothing but thrust, answer him as it is set down in the 16th ground of the short sword fight & also in diverse places of the 8th chapter

9. Also consider if he lies at the thrust upon the Stocata or Passata, & you have no way to avoid him, except you can cross his sword blade with yours, & so indirect his point, therefore keep narrow space upon his point, & keep well your distance in using your traverses.⁵⁰

But if he puts forth his point so that you may cross it with (the) forehand ward, for if you watch for his thrust then lie upon forehand ward with you point a little up if he lies with his pointed mounted, & if you single your thrust upon the outside of your sword to ward your right side, or back of your sword hand, strike or bear his point out towards your right side, & thereupon putting forward your body & left foot circularly toward his right side you may strike him upon his sword arm, head, face or body.⁵¹

Or if you take it on the inside of your sword blade to ward your left side ⁵²then with your sword put by his point strongly & suddenly towards your left side, drawing your left circularly back behind the heel of your right foot, & strike him on the inside of his sword hand or arm or on the head, face, or body, & fly out according to your governors.

This may you use against the sword & dagger long or short, or rapier & poniard, or sword & buckler.

10. Also remember if he has a long sword& you a short sword, ever to make your space too narrow, that you may always break his thrust before that be in force if possible you may, & also to keep large distance whether he charge you out of the Stocata, Passata, or Imbrocata, etc..

Of this you may see more at large in the 8th chapter.

The manner of certain grips & closes to be used at the single short sword fight, etc..

Cap. 6.

1. If he strikes aloft at the left side of your head, and run in withal to take the close or grip of you, then ward it guardant, & enter in with your left side putting in your left hand, on the inside of his sword arm, near his hilt, bearing your hand over his arm, & wrap in his hand & sword under your arm, as he comes in, wresting his hand & sword close to your body turning back your right side from him, so shall he not be able to reach your sword, but you shall still have it at liberty to strike or thrust him & endanger the breaking of his arm, or the taking away of his sword by that grip.

⁵⁰How to engage with a man who uses his point.

⁵¹A "demi-volte" after a parry of "tierce"

⁵²A "demi-volte" after a parry of "quarte."

2. If you are both crossed in the close fight upon the bastard guardant ward low(?), you may put your left hand on the outside of his sword at the back of his hand, near or at the hilt of his sword arm & take him on the inside of the arm with your hand, above his elbow is best, & draw him towards you strongly, wresting his knuckles downward & his elbow upwards so may endanger to break his arm, or cast him down, or to wrest his sword out of his hand, & go free yourself.
3. In like sort upon this kind of close, you may clap your left hand upon the wrist of his sword arm, holding it strongly & therewith thrust him hard from you, & presently you may thrust him in the body with your sword for in that instant he can neither ward, strike, nor thrust.
4. If he strike home at the left side of your head, & therewith all come in to take the close or grip of your hilt or sword arm with his left hand, first ward his blow guardant, & be sure to put in your left hand under your sword & take hold on the outside of his left hand, arm or sleeve, putting your hand under the wrist of his arm with the top of your fingers upward, & your thumb & knuckles downward, then pluck him strongly towards your left side, so shall you indirect his feet, turning his left shoulder toward you, upon which instant you may strike or thrust him with your sword & fly out safe, for his feet being indirected, although he has his sword at liberty, yet shall he be not able to make any offensive fight against you because his time will be too long to direct his feet again to use his sword in due time.
5. Also if he attempts to close or grip with you upon his bastard guardant ward, then cross his sword with the like ward, & as he comes in with his feet you have the time of your hand & body, whereby with your left hand or arm you may put by his sword blade, which thing you must suddenly & strongly do, casting it towards your left side, so may you uncross & thrust him in the body with your sword & fly out instantly, for if you stay there he will direct his sword again & endanger you, this may safely be done, or you may uncross & turn your point up, & strike him on the head, & fly out instantly.
6. If he presses in to the half-sword upon a forehand ward, then strike a sound blow at the left side of his head turning strongly your hand & hilt pressing down his sword hand & arm strongly, & strike your hilt full in his face, bearing your hilt strongly upon him, for your hand being uppermost you have the advantage of the grip, for so may you break his face with your hilt, & strike up his heels with your left foot, and throw him a great fall, all this may safely be done by reason that he is weak in his coming in by that moving of his feet, & you repel him in the fullness of your strength, as appears in the chapter of the short single sword fight, in the 23rd ground of the same.
7. Remember that you never attempt the close nor grip but look to his slip, consider what is said in the 8th general rule in the second chapter, & also in the 26th ground of the single sword fight in the 4th chapter.

*Of the short sword & dagger fight
against the like weapon*

Cap. 7.

1. Observe at these weapons the former rules, defend with your sword & not your dagger, yet you may cross his sword with your dagger, if you may conveniently reach the same therewith, without putting in your foot, only by bending in your body, otherwise your time will be too long, & his time will be sufficient to displace his own, so that you shall not hit it with your dagger, & so he may make a thrust upon you, this time that I here mean, of putting by of his sword is, when he lies out spent with his sword point towards you, & not else, which thing if you can do (it) without putting in your foot, then you may use your dagger & strike strongly & suddenly his sword point therewith up, or down, to indirect the same, that done, instantly therewith strike or thrust at him with your sword.

2. Also you may put by his sword blade with your dagger when your swords are crossed, either above at forehead ward, or below at the bastard guardant ward & therewith instantly strike or thrust with your sword & fly out according to your governors, of this you may see more at large in the chapter of the single sword fight in the 24th ground of the same.

3. Also if he is so foolhardy to come to the close, then you may guard with your sword & stab with your dagger, & fly out safe, which thing you may do because his time is too long by the number of his feet, & you have but the swift time of your hand to use, & he cannot stab 'til he has settled into his (stance), & so his time is too late to endanger you or to defend himself.

4. Know that if you defend yourself with your dagger in the other sort than is aforesaid, you shall be in danger to be hurt, because the space of your dagger will be still too wide to defend both blow & thrust for lack of circumference as the buckler has.

5. Also note when you defend blow & thrust with your sword, you have a nearer course to offend your enemy with your sword than when you ward with your dagger, for then you may for the most part from your ward strike or thrust him. 6. You must neither close nor come to the grip at these weapons, unless it is by the slow motion or disorder of your adversary, yet if he attempts to close, or to come to the grip with you, then you may safely close & hurt him with your dagger or buckler & go free yourself, but fly out according to your governors & thereby you shall put him from his attempted close, but see you stay not at any time within distance, but in due time fly back or hazard to be hurt, because the swift motion of the hand being within distance will deceive the eye, whereby you shall not be able to judge in due time to make a true ward, of this you may see more in the chapter of the backsword fight in the 12th ground of the same.

7. If he extends forth his dagger hand you may make your fight the same, remembering to keep your distance & to fly back according to your governors.

Every fight & ward with these weapons, made out of any kind of fight, must be made & done according as is taught in the backsword fight, but only that the dagger must be used as is above said, instead of the grip.

8. If he lies bent upon his Stocata with his sword or rapier point behind his dagger so you cannot reach the same without putting in your foot, then make all your fight at his dagger hand, so that you may cross his sword blade with yours, then make narrow space upon him with your point & suddenly & strongly strike or bear his point towards his right side, indirecting the same, & instantly strike or thrust him on the head, face arm or body, & fly back therewith out of distance still remembering your governors.

9. If he lies spent upon his variable fight then keep your distance & make your space narrow upon him, 'til you may cross his sword or rapier point with your sword point, whereupon, you having won or gained the place, strike or thrust instantly.

10. If he lies bent or spent upon the Imbrocata bear up your point, & make your space narrow & do the like.

Of the short sword & dagger fight against the long sword & dagger or long rapier & poniard.

Cap. 8.

1. If you have the short sword & dagger, defend with your sword & not with your dagger, except (if) you have a gauntlet or hilt upon your dagger hand, then you may ward upon forehead ward, upon the double with the point of your sword towards his face.

2. Lie not aloft with your short sword if he lies low variable upon the Stocata or Passata, etc., for then your space will be too wide to make a true cross in due time, or too far in his course to make your space narrow, which space take heed to make very narrow, yes, so that if it touches his blade, it is better.

3. I say make your space narrow until you can cross his sword blade strongly & suddenly, so shall you put by his point out of the right line, & instantly strike or thrust, & slip back according to your governors.

But take heed unless you can surely & safely cross go not in, but although you can so cross, & thereupon you enter in, stay no by it but fly out according to your governors.

4. If with his long sword or rapier he charges you aloft out of his open or true guardant fight, striking at the right side of your head, if you have a gauntlet or closed hilt upon your dagger hand, then ward it double with forehead ward, bearing your sword hilt to ward your right shoulder, with your knuckles upward & your sword point to ward the

right side of his breast or shoulder, crossing your dagger on your sword blade⁵³, resting it there upon the higher side of your sword bearing both your hilts close together with your dagger hilt a little behind your sword bearing both your hands right out together spent or very near spent when you ward his blow, meeting him so upon your ward that his blow may light at your half sword or within, so that his blade may slide from your sword & rest with your dagger, at which instant time thrust forth your point at his breast & fly out instantly, so shall you continually endanger him & go safe yourself.

5. If he strikes a loft at the left side of your head, ward as aforesaid, bearing your sword hilt towards your left shoulder with your knuckles downward⁵⁴, & your sword point towards the left side of his breast or shoulder, bowing your body & head a little towards him, & remember to bear your ward to both sides that he strike you not upon the head, then upon his blow meet his sword as aforesaid with your dagger crossed over your sword blade as before, when his sword by reason of his blow upon your sword shall slide down & rest upon your dagger, then suddenly cast his sword blade out toward your left side with your dagger, to indirect his point, & therewith thrust at his breast from your ward & fly out instantly, the like may you do if his sword glance out from yours, upon his blow.

All this may safely be done with the short sword & closed hilted dagger or gauntlet. 6.

Stay not within distance of the long sword or rapier with your short sword, nor suffer him to win the place of you, but either cross his sword, or make your space very narrow to cross it before his blow or thrust be in force, yet keeping your distance whereby he shall strike or thrust at nothing, & so shall be subject to the time of your hand against the time of his feet.

7. Keep distance & lie as you think best for your ease & safety, yet so that you any strike, thrust or ward, & when you find his point certain, then make your space narrow & cross his sword, so shall you be the first mover, & enter first into your action, & he being an after doer, si not able to avoid your cross, not narrow space, nor any such offense as shall be put into execution against him.

8. Having crossed his long sword or rapier with your short sword blade, & put his point out of the straight line by force then strike or thrust at him with your sword & fly out instantly according to your governors.

9. Stand not upon guardant fight only, for so he will greatly endanger you out of his other fights because you have made yourself a certain mark to him, for in continuing in that fight only you shall not only weary yourself, but do also exclude yourself from the benefit of the open, variable, & closed fights, & so shall he have four fights to your one, as you may see in the chapter of the short single sword fight in the 15th ground thereof.

If he lies in open or true guardant fight, then you may upon your open or guardant fight safely bring yourself to the half sword, & then you may thrust him in the body, under his

⁵³Cross block with the sword in "quinte" and the dagger in "quarte"?

⁵⁴Cross block with the sword in "quarte" and the dagger in "sixte."

guard or sword when he bears it guardant, because he is too weak in his guard, but fly out instantly, & he cannot bring in his point to hurt you.

except (if) he goes back with his foot or feet, which time is too long to answer the swift time of the hand.

If he puts down his sword lower to defend that thrust then will his head be open, so that you may strike him on the head over his sword & fly out therewith, which thing he cannot defend, because his space is too wide to put up his blade in due time to make a true ward for the same.

11. Understand that the whole sum of the long rapier fight is either upon the Stocata, Passata, Imbrocata, or Mountanta, all these, and all the rest of their devices you may safely prevent by keeping your distance, because thereby you shall still drive him to use the time of his feet, whereby you shall still prevent him of the true place, & therefore he cannot in due time make any of these fights offensive upon you by reason that the number of his feet will still be too great, so that he shall still use the slow time of his feet to the swift time of your hand.

Now you can plainly see how to prevent all these, but for the better example note this, whereas I say by keeping of distance some may object that then the rapier man will come in by degrees with such ward as shall best like him, & drive back the sword man continually, to whom I answer, the he can not dom by reason that the sword man's traverses are made circularly, so that the rapier man in his coming in has no place to carry the point of his rapier, in due time to make home his fight, but that still his rapier will lie within the compass of the time of the sword man's hand, to make a true cross upon him, the which cross being made with force he may safely uncross, & hurt the rapier man in the arm, head, face or body, with blow or thrust, & fly out safe before he shall have tie to direct his point again to make his thrust upon the sword man,

12. If the rapier man lies upon the Stocata, first make your space narrow with your short sword, & take heed that he strikes not down your sword point with his dagger & so jump in & hurt you with the thrust of his long rapier, which thing he may do because he has commanded your sword, & so you are left open & discovered & left only unto the uncertain ward of your dagger, which ward is to single for a man to venture his life on, which if you miss to perform never so little you are hurt or slain.

13. To prevent this danger you must remember your governors, & presently upon his least motion be sure of your distance, & your narrow space, then do as follows.

14. If he lies upon his Stocata, with his rapier point within or behind his dagger hand out straight, then lie upon variable in measure with your right foot before & your sword point out directly with your space very narrow as near his rapier point as you may, between his rapier point & his dagger hand, from which you may suddenly with a wrist blow, lift up your point & strike him on the outside or inside of his dagger hand, & fly out withal, then make your space narrow as before, then if he thrust home at you, you are already prepared for his thrust, or you may thrust at his dagger hand, doing which you may think best, but your blow must be only by moving your wrist, for if you lift up your

hand & arm to fetch a large blow then your time will be too long, & your space too wide in due time to make a true ward to defend yourself from his thrust, so shall you hurt him although he has a gauntlet thereon, for your thrust will run up between his fingers, & your blow will cut off the fingers of his gauntlet, for he cannot defend himself from one blow or thrust of 20, by reason that you have the place to reach home at his hand, & for that cause he cannot prevent it, neither can he reach home to you without putting in his foot or feet, because the distance is too large, but upon every blow or thrust that you make at his hand slip back a little, so you shall still upon every blow or thrust that you make at him, be out of his reach.

But if upon your blow or thrust he will enter in with his foot or feet to make home his Stocata or thrust upon you, then by reason of you sliding back, you shall be prepared in due time to make a perfect ward to defend yourself with your sword.

Therefore ever respect his rapier point & remember to make & keep narrow space upon it with your sword point, that you may be sure to break his thrust before it is in full force.

15. If he thrust at your higher parts with his point a little mounted, then make narrow your space with your point upon his, if you cross his blade on the inside between his rapier & his dagger, if he presses in then from your cross beat or bear back his point strongly towards his right side, & having indirected his point, strike him on the inside of the rapier or dagger hand or arm, or on the head, face, or body, & fly out instantly.

Or you may upon his pressing in with his thrust slip your point down as he comes in, & put up your hilt & ward it guardant, & therewith from that ward cast out his point, & suddenly strike him in one of the places aforesaid, & fly out instantly remembering your governors.

16. If he lies fast & does not come in, then strike & thrust

at his dagger hand, with your wrist blow & slip back therewith every time.

17. But if he lies fast & beats down your point with his dagger, & then thrusts at you from his Stocata then turn up your hilt with your knuckles upward & your nails downward, taking his blade upon the backside of yours towards your left side & bear it guardant towards that side, & so may you offend him as before is said upon that ward.

18. The like may you do upon him if he lays out his point, when you have crossed the same with yours, & then strike it to either side, & so indirect his point, and then strike or thrust & fly out.

19. The like you must do, if he lies with his point direct towards your belly.

20. But if you cross his point so mounted or directed as above said, upon the outside of your sword with his point a little higher than your hilt, so that you may cross his blade, then if he thrust over your blade single uncrossing the same, then you may break it with your forehand ward out towards your right side, & if he comes in therewith, then strike him on the outside of his rapier hand or arm, or on the head or face, & fly out therewith.

21. But if he thrusts in over your sword as above said & presses in his blade strongly double with the help of his dagger, then put down your point & turn up your hilt guardant, so shall you safely defend it bearing it guardant out towards your left side & from that strike him in between his rapier and dagger in one of the aforesaid places & fly out.

But if from the cross he slips his point down to thrust under your sword, then strike down his point towards his left foot & therewith strike him on the outside of his rapier hand or arm, head, face, or body & fly out instantly, according to your governors.

Also you may upon this of his point down, then turn your point short over his blade in your stepping back, & put your point down in the inside of his blade, turning up your hilt guardant as aforesaid, & then if he thrusts at you, bear it guardant towards your left side, & then have you the same offensive blows & thrusts against him as is above said upon the same ward.

22. If he lies after the Stocata with his point down towards your foot, then cross his blade of the outside, & if he turns his point over your blade to make his thrust upon you, bear it out towards your left side, & from that ward offend him as aforesaid.

23. Also in this fight take heed that he thrusts you not in the sword hand or arm, therefore ever respect to draw it back in due time, remembering therein your twofold governor, in your coming in, to make your cross or narrow space.

24. If at sword & dagger or buckler he strikes in at the outside of your right leg ward it with the back of your sword, carrying your point down, bewareing you knuckles

downward & your nails upward⁵⁵, bearing your sword out strongly towards your right side, upon which ward, you may strike him on the outside of the left leg, or thrust him in the thigh or belly.

25. The like may you do if he strike at your other side, if you ward his blow with the edge of your sword your hand and knuckles as aforesaid⁵⁶, casting out his sword blade towards your left side, this may be used at short or long sword fight.

26. You must never use any fight against the long rapier or dagger with your short sword but the variable fight, because your space will be too wide & your time too long, to defend or offend in due time.

27. Also you must use very large distance ever, because out of that fight you can hardly make a true cross because being within distance, the eye is deceived to it in due time.

28. Remember in putting forth your sword point to make your space narrow, when he lies upon his Stocata, or any thrust, you must hold the handle thereof as it were long your hand, resting the pommel thereof in the hollow part of the middle of the heel of your hand towards the wrist, & the former part of the handle must be held between the forefinger & thumb, without the middle joint of the forefinger towards the top thereof, holding that finger somewhat straight out gripping round your handle with your other 3 fingers⁵⁷, & laying your thumb straight towards his, the better to be able to perform this action perfectly, for if you grip your handle close out-thwart (?) in your hand, then you cannot lay your point straight upon his to make your space narrow, but that your point will still lie too wide to do the same in due time, & this is the best way to hold your sword in all kinds of variable fight. But upon your guardant or open fight then hold it with full gripping it in your hand, & not laying your thumb along the handle, as some use, then shall you never be able to strongly to ward a strong blow⁵⁸ This have I written out of my entire love that I bear to my countrymen, wishing them yet once again to follow the truth, & to fly the vain imperfect rapier fight, the better to save themselves from wounds & slaughter, for who so(ever) attains to the perfection of this true fight which I have here set forth in these my brief instructions, & also in paradoxes of defence, shall not only defend themselves, but shall thereby bring those that fight upon the imperfect fight of the rapier under their mercy, or else put them in Cobb's traverse⁵⁹, where of you may read in the 38th chapter of my paradoxes aforesaid.

Of the sword & buckler fight.

Cap. 9.

⁵⁵Parry "octave" and reposte with cut to the thigh or body thrust.

⁵⁶Parry "septime" and reposte.

⁵⁷The "french" grip.

⁵⁸A "hammer" grip.

⁵⁹A reference in "Paradoxes of Defence" meaning to "run away."

Sword & Buckler fight, & sword & dagger fight are all one, saving that you may safely defend both blow & thrust, single with your buckler only, & in like sort you may safely ward both blows & thrusts double, that is with sword & buckler together which is a great advantage against the sword & dagger, etc., & is the surest fight of all short weapons.

Of the two hand sword fight against the like weapon.

Cap. 10.

These weapons are to be used in the fight s the short staff, if both play upon double & single hand, at the 2 hand sword, the long sword has the advantage if the weight thereof is not too heavy for his strength that has it, but if both play only upon double hand, then his blade which is convenient length agreeing with his stature that has it, which is according with the length of the measure of his single sword blade, has the advantage of the sword that is too long for the stature of the contrary party, because he that can cross & uncross, strike & thrust, close & grip in shorter time than the other can.

Of the short staff fight, being of convenient length, against the like weapon.

Cap. 11.

The short staff has 4 wards, that is 2 with the point up, & 2 with the point down.

1. At these weapons ever lie so you may be able to thrust single & double, & to ward, strike, or thrust in due time, so shall your enemy, if he strikes only upon double hand be driven of necessity, seeking to win the place, to gain you the place whereby you may safely hurt him, & go free yourself by reason of your distance, & where you shall seek to win the place upon him he shall not be able to gain the place upon you, nor keep the place from you whereby he shall either be hurt, or in great danger of hurt, by reason of your large reach, true place & distance, your fight being truly handled keeping itself from close & grip.
2. And in like sort shall it be between two, which shall play upon the best, that is, if they play both double & single handed.
3. If you find yourself too strong for your adversary in any manner of ward, whether the same be above or below, put by his staff with force, & then strike or thrust him from it, 4. But if you find him too strong for you upon his blows from aloft, so that you can hardly bear them upon your ward, then when he strikes in aloft at your head, & by his main strength would beat down your staff, & so give you a hurt before you shall be able to come again into your ward.

Against such a one give a slip in the sort, suddenly draw back the higher part of your

body a little & your foremost foot withal, & slip in the point of your staff under his staff, & thrust single at him, & fly out with all, so shall you be sure to hit him & go out free.

5. If he lies aloft with his staff, then you lie with your back hand low, with your point upwards towards his staff, making your space narrow because you may cross his staff to ward his blow before it comes into full force, & then strongly & suddenly misdirect his point & so thrust at him single, the which you may do before he can remove his feet, by reason of the swiftness of your hand or fly out therewith, do this for both sides of the head if cause requires it, so shall you save both your head, body, and all parts, for your upper parts are guarded, & your lower parts far out of his reach.

6. If he lies low with his point down, then lie you with your point down also, with your foremost hand low & your hind most hand high, so that you may cross his staff, & do all things as said in the other.

7. If he lies upon the thrust then you lie with your space narrow lying up or down with your point in such sort as you may cross his staff, & thereby you shall be able to put or beat by his thrust before it is in full force, & then strike or thrust, ever remembering your governors.

If upon this any will object that if this is true, then it is in vain to strike, to thrust, because he that does it is still in danger, this doubt is answered in the short single sword fight, in the 12th ground thereof.

8. If your adversary strikes aloft at any side of your head or body, ward it with your point up & making your space so narrow that you may cross his staff before it comes in full force bearing or beating down his blow strongly, back again towards that side that he strikes in at you, & out of that ward, then instantly, either strike from that ward turning back your staff, & strike him on that side of the that is next to your staff.

Or lift up your staff again, & so strike him on the head or body, or thrust at his body double or single, as you may find your best advantage ever in holding your staff, let there be such convenient space between your hands, wherein you shall find yourself most apt to ward, strike or thrust to your best liking.

9. If you play with your staff with your left hand before and your right hand back behind, as many men find themselves most apt when that hand is before, & if your adversary upon his blow comes in to take the close of you, when you find his staff crossed with yours near his hand, then suddenly slip up you right hand close to the hind side of your foremost hand, & presently loosing the hind side of your foremost hand & put in under your own staff, & then cross or put by his staff therewith your hand take hold of his staff in such sort that your little finger be towards the point of his staff, & your thumb & forefinger towards his hands, & presently with your right hand mount the point of your own staff casting the point thereof over your right shoulder, with your knuckles downwards, & so stab him in the body or face with the hind end of your staff, but be sure

to stab him at his coming in, whether you catch his staff or not, for sometimes his staff will lie so far out that upon his coming in you cannot reach it, then catch that arm in his coming in which he shall first put forth within your reach, but be sure to stab, for his staff can do you no hurt, and having so done, if you find yourself too strong for him, strike up his heels, if too weak fly out.

10. The like must you do if you play with your right hand & your left hand back behind, but if you need not to slide forth your left hand, because your right hand is in the right place on your staff already to use in that action, but then you must displace your left hand to take hold of his staff, or the grip as is aforesaid, & to use the stab as is above said.

11 If both lie aloft as aforesaid, & play with the left hand before, if he strikes at the right side of your head or body then must you cross his staff before his blow is in full force, by making your space narrow, & then strike it strongly back again towards his left side, & from that ward you may turn back your staff & strike him backward & therewith on the left side of his head, or lift up your staff & strike him on the right or left side of the head, body, or arm, or thrust him in the body, the like blows or thrusts any you make at him whether he strikes or thrusts, having put by his staff, remembering your governors.

The like order must you use in playing with the right hand forward.

12. But if he thrusts at you continually then ever have a special care to consider, whether he lies aloft or below, & does continually thrust at you therefrom, then look that you always lie so that you make your space so narrow upon him, that you are sure to cross his staff with yours, & put it before it is in full force, and from that ward, thrust at him single or double as you find it best, & if he remembers not to fly back at the instant when he thrusts it will be too late for him to avoid any thrust that you shall make at him.

Of the short staff fight against the long staff.

Cap. 12.

1. If you have a staff of the convenient length against a staff of longer length than is convenient, then make your space narrow, & seek not to offend until you have strongly & swiftly put by his point which you shall with ease accomplish, by reason of your narrow space & your force, then strike or thrust him as you shall think best.

2. This short staff fight against the long staff is done in the same sort (as the) short staff fight to short staff fight is done, but that the man with the short staff must always remember to keep narrow space upon the long staff, where so ever the long staff shall lie, high or low, continually make your space narrow upon him, so shall you be sure if he strikes or thrusts at you, to take the same before it is into its full force & by reason that your force is more with your short staff than his can be at the point of his long staff you shall cast his staff so far out of the straight line with your short staff, that you may safely enter in with your feet, & strike or thrust home at him.

3. Yet this present shift he has at that instant, he may slip back his staff in his hands, which time is swifter then your feet coming forward, whereby he will have his staff as short as yours, yet by reason that at the first you cast his staff so far out of the right line, that you had time to enter with your feet, you shall then be so near him, that you make narrow space upon him again, so that he shall have no time to slip foreward his staff again in his former place, nor go back with his feet, & so to recover the hind end of his staff again, because if he slips forth his staff to strike or thrust at you, that may you safely defend because of your narrow space upon him, & therewithal you may strike or thrust him from your ward, either at single or double.

4. But if he will go back with his feet thinking by that means to recover the whole length of his staff again, that can he not do in convenient time because the time of your hand is swifter than the time of his feet, by reason whereof you may strike or thrust him in his going back.

5. Again it is to be remembered in that time that you keep him at bay, upon the drawing in of his staff, the hind end thereof lying so far back behind will be so troublesome for him, that he can make no perfect fight against you & commonly in his drawing in of his staff it will be too short to make a true fight against you, neither to offend you or make himself safe.

6. If he attempts the close with you then stab him with the hind end of your staff as said in the fight of the 2 short staves of convenient length, in the 9th ground thereof.

Note: Remember that at the Morris pike, forest bill, long staff & two handed sword, that you lie in such sort upon your wards that you may both ward, strike & thrust both double & single, & then return to your former wards slips & lie again & then are you as you were before.

The like fight is to be used with the javelin, partisan, halberd, black bill, battle axe, glaive, half pike, etc..

*Of the fight of the forest bill against
the like weapon & against the staff*

Cap. 13.

1. The forest bill has the fight of the staff but it has 4 wards more with the head of the bill, that is one to bear it upwards, another to beat it downwards so that the carriage of your bill head is with the edge neither up nor down but sideways.

The other 2 wards are one to cast his bill head downwards towards the right side, & the other towards the left.

And upon either on of these wards or catches run up to his hands with the head of your bill & then by reason that you have put his staff out of the right line, you may catch at his head, neck, arm or legs, etc., with the edge of your bill, & hook or pluck him strongly to you & fly out withal.

2. If you cast his staff so far out that your bill slides not up to his hands, then you may safely run in sliding your hands within one yard of the head of your bill, & so with your bill in one hand take him by the leg with the blade of your bill & pluck him to you & with your other hand defend yourself from his gripping if he offers to grapple with you.

If you fight bill to bill do the like in all respects as with the staff in your fight, for your bill fight & staff fight is all one, but only for the defence & offense with the head of the bill, & where the staff man upon the close if he uses the stab with the butt end of his staff, the bill man at that time is to use the catch at the leg with the edge of his bill in the second ground above is said.

4. Remember ever in all your fights with this weapon to make your space narrow whether it is against the staff or bill so that whatsoever he shall do against you, you shall still make your ward before he is in his full force to offend you.

5. Also if you can reach within the head of his bill with the head of your bill then suddenly with the head of your bill snatch his bill head strongly towards you, & therewithal indirect his bill head & forcibly run up your bill head to his hands, so have you the like advantage as above said, whereas I spoke of running up towards his hands.

6. If he lies low with this bill head then if you can put your bill head in over the head of his bill, & strongly put down his bill staff with your bill head, bearing it flat, then you may presently run up your bill head single handed to his hands & fly out therewith, so shall you hurt him in the hands & go free yourself.

7. The like may you do with your bill against the short staff you can press it down in the like sort, but if he has a long staff then run up double handed with both hands upon your bill, which thing you may safely do because you are in your strength & have taken him in the weak part of his staff.

8. If he lies high with his bill head then put up your bill head under his & cast out his bill to the side that you shall find most fit, so have you the advantage to thrust or hook at him & fly out.

Or if you cast out his bill far out of the right line then run in & take him by the leg with he edge of your bill, as is said in the 2nd ground of this chapter.

9. If you ward his blow with the bill staff within your bill head then answer him as with the short staff.

Note: That as the bill man's advantage is to take the staff with the head of the bill so that the staff man by reason that the head of the bill is a fair mark has the advantage of him in the casting aside of the head of the bill with his staff or beating it aside, the which if the bill man looks not very well into the staff man thereupon will take all manner of advantages of the staff fight against him.

*Of the fight of the morris pike against
the like weapon*

Cap. 14.⁶⁰

1. If you fight with your enemy having both morris pikes with both points of your pikes forewards, low upon the ground, holding he butt end of the pike in one hand single with knuckles upwards & the thumb underneath, with the thumb & forefinger towards your face & the little finger towards the point of the pike, bearing the butt end of the pike from the one side to the other right before your face, then lie you with your arm spent & your body open with your hand to your right side with your knuckles downwards & your nails upwards.

Or you may lie in that sort, with your hand over to the left side with your knuckles upwards & your nails downwards, whereby all your body will be open, if then he shall suddenly raise up the point of his pike with his other hand & come thrust at you, then in the mounting of his point or his coming in, suddenly toss the point of your pike with your hand single & so thrust him in the legs with your pike & fly out therewith.

Or else you may stand upon your ward & not toss up your point but break his thrust by crossing the point of his pike with the middle of your pike by casting up your hand, with the butt end of your pike above your head, & so bearing over his point with your staff, to the other side as for example.

2. If you lie with your hand spent towards your right side then bear his point towards your left side, & thereupon gather up your pike with your other hand & thrust him & fly out.

If he continues his fight with his point above, & you lie with your pike breast high &

⁶⁰"the Chapter on the Morris pike is unique, as no other work speaks of parries with that weapon."- W. London

higher with you hand & point so, that you make your thrust at his face or body with your point directly towards his face, holding your pike with both your hands on your back hand with your knuckles upwards & your foreward hand with your knuckles downwards & there shaking your pike & falsing at his face with your point as near his face as you may, then suddenly make out your thrust single handed at his face & fly out withal, which thrust he can hardly break one of 20 by reason that you made your space so narrow upon his guard, so that you being first in your action he will still be too late in his defence to defend himself.

4. But note while you lie falsing to deceive him look to your legs that he in the mean time toss not up the point of his pike single handed & hurt you therewith in the shins.

5. If he lies so with his point up aloft as you dom then make your space narrow mounting your point a little & cross his pike with yours & strongly and suddenly cast his point out of the right line & thrust home fro the same single or double as you find your best advantage, & fly out therewith.

Or you may run in when you have cast out his point finding both your hands on your staff 'til you come within 3 quarters of a yard of the head of your pike & stab him through with one hand & with the other keep him from the grip.

6. Now if he is a man of skill, notwithstanding the making of the fault in suffering you to do so yet this help he has, as you are coming in he will suddenly draw in his pike point & fly back withal, then have you no help but to fly out instantly to the middle of your pike & from thence back to the end & then are you as at the first beginning of your fight you were.

7. If you find that he lies far out of the right line with his point or that you can o far indirect the same then cast your pike out of your hands, cross over upon the middle of his pike, by which means you shall entangle his pike, then while he does strive to get his pike at liberty, run you in suddenly drawing your dagger & strike or staff at him.

8. Then if he has the perfection of this fight as well as you, he will be ready with his dagger as you are with yours, then must you fight it out at the single dagger fight as is shown in the 15th chapter: then he that has not the perfection of that fight goes to ruin. 9.

And here note that in all the course of my teaching of these my brief instructions if both the parties have the full perfection of the true fight then the one will not be able to hurt the other at what perfect weapon soever.

10. But if a man that has the perfection of fight shall fight with one that has it not then must that unskillful man go to ruin & the other go free.

Of the single dagger fight against the like weapon

Cap. 15.

1. First know that to this weapon there belongs no wards or grips but against such a one as is foolhardy & will suffer himself to have a full stab in the face or body or hazard the giving of another, then against him you may use your left hand in throwing him aside or strike up his heels after you have stabbed him.
2. In this dagger fight, you must use continual motion so shall he not be able to put you to the close or grip, because your continual motion disappoints him of his true place, & the more fierce he is in running in, the sooner he gains you the place, whereby he is wounded, & you not anything the rather endangered.
3. The manner of handling your continual motion is this, keep out of distance & strike or thrust at his hand, arm, face or body, that shall press upon you, & if he defends blow or thrust with his dagger make your blow or thrust at his hand.
4. If he comes in with his left leg forewards or with the right, do you strike at that part as soon as it shall be within reach, remembering that you use continual motion in your progression & regression according to your twofold governors.
5. Although the dagger fight is thought a very dangerous fight by reason of the shortness & singleness thereof, yet the fight thereof being handled as is aforesaid, is as safe & as defensive as the fight of any other weapon, this ends my brief instructions.

FINIS.

Of Times

hand

foot

1. The time of the hand & foot
foot hand. naught

of place space, strength, & time

1. The time of the hand is when you strike from a ward of stand in place to strike.
2. The time of the foot is when you step forward to strike or when you gather towards your own right side.
3. The time of the hand & foot is when you tread your ground in course to strike rather than pressing forwards, or when you slide back or go back, your hand & foot being then of equal agility.
4. The time of the foot & hand is when you handle your guardant play using then a slow motion in both.

There is but 1 good way to gather upon your enemy, guardant. All other are dangerous & subject to the blows on the head or thrust on the body.

For no way can ward both but as aforesaid.

Your hand & feet in good play must go together, whether it is in quick or in slow motion.

In gathering forwards or towards your right side your hand falls from your place, space, time, & strength, & so falls out the loss of time.

When you gather & suffer that govern your fight, defend only. When you do, be single, or not fixed towards any single lying, but also the quickness of your hand in its proper place carried.

In breaking the thrust when you lie aloft single or guardant & space your arm somewhat bowing in warding the blow, have respect to your place of hand & strength, your arm straight. This course in your time is best performed, the one of these with your hand aloft your point down the other your hand in place your (hand?point?) more high your space less curious.

Double(fence	defence	treble	
time			ward
place			way
space			slow motion
hand			double
arm,weapon	true single	spacious	
body		straight	obscure
foot		manifest	

II. Time is chiefly to be observed in both actions upon which place **93re** or space waits.

Upon these 3 the 4 following, upon these 4 the first 3, upon these the latter 3.

To hurt or defend, a time in both is observed to the furtherance of which place is to be gotten, without which time will be too long to perform that which is intended, the space is to be noted between 2 opponents & in respect of touching, or in regard of saving as also for preserving of time, by the small way it has either to the body, or putting by the weapon.

The next 4 must be used together to perform the other 3 rules, for the hand being nimble & quick of itself may else be hindered in the want of any of these, the weapon must be framed & inclined to serve the agility of the hand either in hurting or defending.

The body upright or leaning to the weapon, that it hinders not the disposition of the other 2 the foot answerable to them plying the hand & ward all in straight space, the ward with the hand high with the point down, the arm straight out as ready for both actions The way under the ward withdrawing the body from harm, the motion slow that the action of the hand is not hindered.

The rest are the dispositions of the placed(/)displaced handlings

slow foot : swift hand : quick foot : slow hand

tread : stride : follow : fall-away

When you seek to offend with blow or thrust, your place of the hand is lost, the way to redeem it is to slide back under your lofty ward as aforesaid always that your adversary lie aloft ready to strike or thrust or use his hand only.

If you would offend him that lies low upon the thrust when you displace your weapon from aloft you may after your blow at head or arm or nearest place, stand & thrust before you go back because he is out of place & space & cannot cross, & thereby losses his time to annoy you & you may thrust & retire for a new assault.

this is not so sound

In striking or thrusting never hinder your hand with putting forth your foot but keep the place thereof 'til you have offended with the one only the bending of your body very little foreward any suffice, else you loose a double time, one in setting forth your foot, the other in recovering your lost place of your foot both to the loss of time & your purpose

Strike : thrust : ward : break
the double offense is in striking & thrusting
warding the blow

The 3 fold breaking or putting by the thrust
defence flying back under your hanging ward

win the place : stand fast, strike home

offend, defend, & go safe All under play is beaten with most agile, single & the lofty
the lofty with the guardant, His when with his foot he seeks the low lying is out of place
to

offend defend or not so for lack of time
space & crossing, if he lies out with his
longer weapon it is put by from aloft, who
has place, time & reach of body &
arm all with the cross.

93re the reading
the enter lying
of other things
thereto adjoin-
ing

the lofty naked play is beaten with the ward because of cross, space, time

to defend, the lofty naked single loose play serves to win the time of the low & double
play.

The bent guardant requires your arm straight high & outside the point towards (93
re II well) the body & foot that way inclined