

Transcription by David Kite

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A note on transcription.

Rigorous documentary editing practice would dictate a transcription faithful to the original printing. This is what my original transcription attempted to accomplish, remaining faithful to spelling, grammar, and punctuation. However, given the process by which books were produced and contemporary editorial practices, the author's original spelling, and to a lesser extent grammar, are impossible to determine without having the original manuscript Joseph Swetnam provided to the printer. Due to this reality, and the fact that I intend to make the book more accessible to modern audiences, some alterations have been made.

Spelling has been modernized to American English throughout. Proper nouns have also been modernized, except where noted. Since this is an updated version of my original transcription, which was faithful to the original printing, and since I have become so accustomed to archaic spellings that I am often blind to them, there are likely to be a few I overlooked. Syntax and punctuation have been maintained, including the use of helping verbs. To have modernized the language would have meant altering a text, which, by and large, can still speak for itself to the modern ear. Obsolete or archaic words have therefore been retained, except where noted. For space and formatting considerations in the original edition, the printer used contractions (a tilde over a letter preceding the omission). These have been expanded. Also, where a word was repeated seemingly mistakenly, I have deleted the redundant word or words. Individual words in *italics* have also been maintained, however, entire passages originally printed in *italics* have not. Words split between lines or pages have been made whole. Any mistakes in this transcription are my own.

Bold text in **[brackets]** indicate page numbers and folio markers. Pages with no **[brackets]** lack page numbers and folio markers in the original. There are several pagination errors in the original copy, including page number duplications, though the text itself is what it is supposed to be. As far as this transcription is concerned, the page numbers represent the numbers in the original printing, and have not been corrected to the "actual" page numbers. Pagination errors are indicated by a (sic).

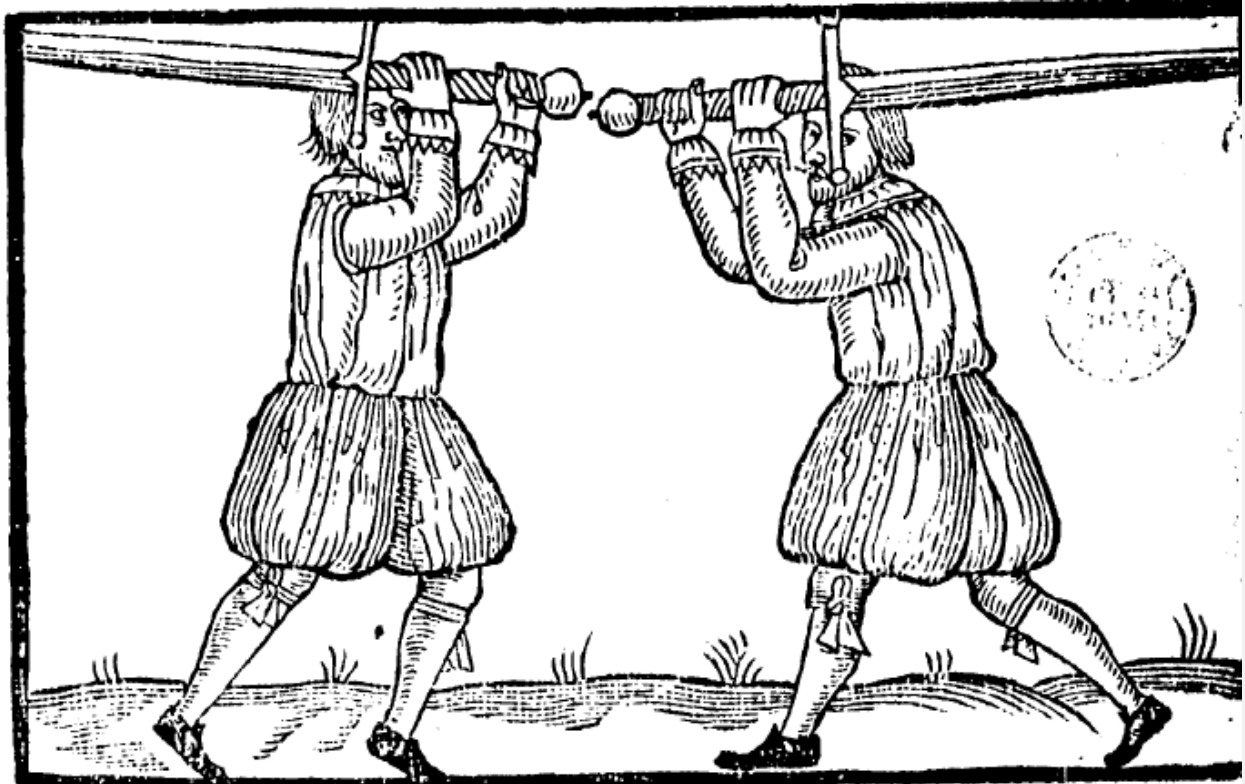
**THE
SCHOOL OF THE NOBLE
and Worthy Science of Defense.**

Being the first of any English man's invention, which professed the said science; so plainly described, that any man may quickly
*come to the true knowledge of their weapons, with
small pains and little practice.*

Then read it advisedly, and use the benefit thereof when occasion shall serve, so shall thou be a good commonwealth man, live happy to thy self,
and comfortable to thy friend.

*Also many other good and profitable precepts and counsels for the managing of quarrels
and ordering thy self in many other matters.*

Written by JOSEPH SWETNAM.



LONDON
Printed by NICHOLAS OKES. 1617.

[Folio A2 recto]

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the high and mighty Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, York, Albany and Rothesay, Marquis of Ormonde, Earl of Ross, and Baron of Ardmannoch, High Seneschal of Scotland, Lord of the Isles, and Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.

Most gracious and noble Prince, the many great and kind favors which I received from the hands of your late brother deceased, unto whom I was tutor in the skill of weapons, to my no little credit, which makes me now turn back to show my love in a small measure unto your princely self, and yet it is as much as I am able, a bunch of grapes is but a small present, and yet King *Philip of Macedon*

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did receive them, and accept them, and the rather, because a poor man presented them, and therefore I trust Your Highness will more esteem the good will of the giver, than the value of the gift.

Three things did chiefly encourage me to publish it under the glorious name of Your Gracious Highness: The first is, in regard of Your Highness' deep desire to gain experience in all arts and sciences, the which is seen by Your Grace's favoring and furthering any man which is endued with any good quality, therein rightly resembling a branch of the same stock from whence Your Excellency sprang, of whom in my next Epistle to the Reader I will speak more at large: but at this time for doubt of being offensive, with the renewing of old griefs, I stand in amaze, like unto that child,

[Folio A3 recto]

who being asked whether he loved his father or his mother best, stood mute as doubting how to answer for fear of displeasing the one of them: even so in this place will I. Now the second cause of this my dedication unto Your Excellency is, in respect of my vehement love whereto in duty I am bound unto your princely self: and thirdly, that it may pass under Your Highness' protection, the better to shroud itself from back-biters and fault-finders, lest amongst such it be taken up like a friendless vagrant: Oh therefore let it find favor, I humbly entreat Your Highness, although it can little please your princely self, yet it may stead many others, and so doubting lest I have troubled Your Highness overlong, I will therefore here draw the curtains, and commit Your Highness to the protection of the Almighty, who ever bless,

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preserve and keep Your Highness with long life, and prosperous health, and happiness to the world's end.

By Your Highness to be
commanded so long as
I live.
Joseph Swetnam.

AN EPISTLE UNTO THE COMMON READER.

In letting out of a book, friendly reader, this I know, that there is no better a thing to be observed than order, for except there be an order in all things, all runs to confusion, but what do I mean to talk of orders, which am no scholar, nor have no learning; but only a little experience, which God and nature have bestowed upon me. As it is impossible to build a church without lime or stone, no more can a workman work without tools, yet to avoid idleness, something I will make of it, although I cannot make it sound to so good a tune as I would, for want of learning, for I was never at *Oxford* but while I baited my horse; nor at *Cambridge* but while one *Stourbridge* fair lasted: wherefore if you do examine me concerning learning, I shall answer you as the fellow did the gentleman, who asking him the way to *London*, a poke full of plumbs sir said he; or as he which came from a sermon was asked what he heard there; he said it was a good sermon, and the preacher spoke well, but he could not tell one word what he said, no more can I answer one word scholar-like or according to learning; yet both at *Oxford* and *Cambridge* I looked upon the scholars, and they looked upon me, and so I became a little the older, but never the wiser; wherefore if I should continue tempering this book so long till I had put it in order, I should resemble those, which do make their apparel so long of the newest fashion, until they are quite out of fashion, or like as the fiddlers do their strings, who wrest them and temper them so long, until they bring them out of all time, tune, and reason, lest I should do so I will let it go with this draft as it is: but gentle reader look not here to gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles: nor of a wild and barren tree, nothing else but

wild and barren fruit, yet amongst dust, sometimes there are pearls found, and in hard rocks gold and stones of great price, I have here as it were mixed wheat and rye, barley and oats, beans and peas all together, now take a little pains to separate that grain which thou like best for thine own benefit. I give thee here a friendly caveat, to prepare thy self in a readiness, for although thou are at quiet now, yet do thou not know how soon thou shall be urged to take weapons in hand, as myself and many others have been, when I least thought upon it, therefore to have judgment and skill in weapons is good, although thou never have occasion to use it. The proverb says cunning is no burden, the same mouth which at one time says, I will live quietly, for I will make no brawls with any, yet at another time he again will say, oh that I had skill, for then would I be revenged on such a one that has injuriously wronged me. Therefore for such a cause be prepared beforehand, for if the King were sure that he should never have wars, what need had he then to provide armor and weapons, but in the time of peace he provides himself; the wise mariner provides in a calm for a storm, for things doubtful are to be dreadful. It is better to live in fear than in security, and to this purpose *Tully* has a pretty saying which goes thus; *he which desires peace let him provide for wars,*¹ but I fear me that the tide will be spent, before I can double this point, and therefore here I will cast anchor, and will ride in this road something longer than I would, for fear lest I cast my bark away on a lee shore, for want of water; these words of wariness do I use because there are many which no sooner out of the shell, but are cast away like an addle egg.

Therefore I would not have young sprigs spoiled in the blossom, I mean I would not have young branches or young enterers into the world embark themselves in the ship of fools, for fear lest they cast themselves away in a manner, before they have had any beginning, for I have known many blasted in the budding in a manner, before they came to know cheese from chalk: only for want of instruction, and likewise some again have perished, and yet not for want of instruction, but they have known what was good for them, and yet would not seek it,

¹ Tully is probably Marcus Tullius Cicero, though the earliest attribution to the quote is Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus in *De Re Militari*. Swetnam's source for the quote is unknown, though he may simply be mistaken.

[Folio B recto]

but have delayed the means, as many delay their repentance, till the latter day, or till it is too late, not much unlike the sluggard, which rousing himself, and looking abroad in the morning, he sees that it is high time to rise, yet sluggishly he lies down again to sleep, and so forgets himself; even so many perish, some for want of good counsel, and some for lack of forecasting a mischief before it does light upon them. It is said that we must not tempt God, *Math.4*, but I hold it a tempting of God to presume wholly upon Him for all occasions whatsoever, without seeking other means which are commonly known, and by God prepared for us: as if we were sick men we ought to take the physician's counsel, and if wounded we must seek for help of a surgeon, if our house is on fire we must pour on water, and if we fall in a ditch, we must not lie still without using other means besides, saying God help us, but for this and all other things God has appointed means, we must seek and then no doubt God will give His blessing with it, but we must not presume how carelessly soever we live, or how desperately soever we die, nothing can hinder us of our salvation, but so far deceived I fear me are such, that there is a thunderbolt of mischief prepared for their ignorance herein. Our Savior Christ would not presume so much of the mercy of God the Father, as when He was upon the pinnacle to cast himself down, but He came down by other means, for the stairs were made for the purpose; God the Father might otherwise have saved *Noah* without any ark if it had pleased Him, but *Noah* had warning that such a thing should be, whereupon he sought a means to save himself by making the Ark, therefore he that will not be prepared beforehand with oil in his lamp, or with skill in his weapons, when there is means to be found, he may be shut out of Heaven as the five foolish virgins were if he chances to be slain suddenly, as many a man has been, by dying without repentance.

Indeed if there were no means than if we did with humbleness come unto God, no doubt then I say but God would miraculously defend His servants, as He did the children of Israel when their enemies were behind them, and the Red Sea before them, then there was no means nor help left them, but only in

[Folio B verso]

the Lord, but then the Lord stopped not His ears nor shortened not His arms, but gave them passage with His outstretched arm through the Red Sea, and then again they being in the wilderness, there was neither meat nor drink, and then there again the Lord sent them food from Heaven, and He also made the hard rocks gush forth rivers of water. The mariner in distress throws overboard the merchant's goods which are in ship, and yet then finding small hope of life he cuts down the masts of the ship, and so he throws them and the sails overboard, which should be the only means to bring them to land, but then these mariners being bereft of all hope, they rely wholly upon God, which never leave in distress those which trust in Him, but then He miraculously does defend them, and brings them into a safe harbor contrary unto man's expectation.

So not only here in this place, but as I go on I will show some examples out of the book of God and from the philosophers and other school men, and the application to be applied unto ourselves, for there is nothing written but has been written for our learning, and of those we are to learn counsel of which have run through the brambles, briars, and the mischief of the world.

Then be not wise in thine own conceit, for *S. John* and *Paul* said that the wise are caught in their own craftiness. *John* 9.13.1 *Cor.* 3.19.² If the wise are caught what then will become of the ignorant and foolish, not only of this profession, but of all others; for there are many of all trades which do think their own wit best, and hating to be reformed, but I wish such to take heed of ignorance's pitfall, lest they fall into the springle with the woodcock; for who is so bold as blind bayard. But as some men of all trades with small skill do go on and live by their trades and yet in a manner but botchers, even so I have often heard many a man say, that with a little skill they have saved their lives being put unto trial, for those which are in danger of drowning will catch a straw to save their lives, but for the most part it so falls out, that if the father or the master is a coward, or unskillful in his weapons, then the sons of that father or the servants of that master, seldom prove good soldiers, not much unlike that saying of the prophet when the mother

² John 9:13 should in fact be Job 5:13, and is likely a printer's error.

[Folio B2 recto]

is a Hittite, and the father an Amorite, the child seldom proves an Israelite. *Ezekiel* 45.³ Then we must not follow or go on being led on blindfoldly, by a cowardly sort of people, which will say that a good eye or a good heart is all that belongs unto the defense of a man's body, these are they which professing themselves to be wise, are become fools. *Rom.* 1.22. Or they may be compared unto those which talk of *Robin Hood* and yet never shot in his bow, so this trump have I cast in your way, for loath I am to leave you any starting holes to wind out at, but that you may keep the high beaten way, lest in seeking byways you wander quite out of the way, yet mistake me not in thinking that hereby I seem to hale thee on for thy own good, like a beast, for I do but lead thee with the cords of love, and wish thee to taste of this my opinion which I have new broached. And I make no doubt but in trial it will be no whit distasting unto thee, for by experience I speak it that above all, skill is the key of the work, as the eye to the body, or as the captain to the soldiers, or the pilot to the ship; if the eye is dark in walking, the body falls, if the captain is ignorant, then do the soldiers march disorderly, or if the pilot is unskillful, the ship sails in danger, but as I was about to tell you of a sort of logger-headed asses which furthermore will persuade their familiar friends, by telling them that skill will do them no good, for when they have learned skill and afterwards when they shall have occasion to use their weapons, then such dunces will say that skill will be forgotten and little thought upon.⁴ Also they say that a man with a sword will cut off thy rapier at one blow, but I say this is a most cowardly kind of ignorance, for if a skillful man does hold the rapier, it is not a hundred blows with a sword can do a rapier any harm, no although they light upon him. Therefore those which will persuade any from learning skill with weapons, for the defense of their bodies, may fitly be compared unto the false prophets amongst the Jews, which persuaded them that they should not fear nothing, but peace, peace, peace, when the Assyrians were in a readiness to cut their throats as in the 6 of *Jeremy* the 14, there you may read it, therefore a provident care ought to be had, as *Jehosaphat* did when he feared the Moabites to come upon him, 2 *Chron* 20.3.

Then show not thy self worse than a beast, for beasts have wit to find out remedies to cover their grief.

³ *Ezekiel* 16:3

⁴ George Hale makes the same declaration in the "Induction" to his *Private School of Defence*.

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David lived securely in *Jerusalem*, and without fear, which made him forget God, as in the *2.Sam.11*. The whole chapter is worth the reading; does not the wisest man that ever wrote say, that there is a time of war and a time of peace, *Eccle.3.8*. If a man did know what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, wherefore be advised to deal wisely, but not like unto *Pharaoh* for he said, let us deal wisely when he dealt most foolishly, *Exodus 1.10*. and so we will go on.

In reading over diverse histories I thereby understanding the noble acts, and also noting the manly mind of these who lived many hundred years ago, whose fame shall never die, whereas cowardly dastards which never bent their studies in martial exploits, such I say at their death their fame dies with them, and so they are quickly raked up in the ashes of forgetfulness, and buried in the valley of oblivion. So that if a man would go search for the pedigree of their gentility, they shall find it laid up in a beggar's box, or as the charter of a city written in dust, whereas on the other side the valiant and gallant-minded men, although they die, yet in their lifetime their manly acts and valiant deeds which they worthily performed, some in the wars and some at single combat, and some at other honorable and laudable exercises, whereby they merited to themselves immortal fame forever, for to some no exercise nor weapon came amiss as instead of many examples these two out of the book of God shall be sufficient, *David* with his sling, (as *Hercules* with his club) and *Sampson* with his jaw-bone or any other weapon which came next to his hand, but loath I am to trouble you with so long an epistle or preface, yet for an introduction to the rest something I must say and most of that which I have and will say is so necessary as the rest, although it is longer than I would, but we will now to the matter.

Then thus, by reason of diverse errors which are in sundry men's teaching of this noble art of defense, I therefore being pricked forward by the earnest request of some of my friends, to describe the rules of weapons, which I by my study have invented, and by practice brought to perfection, and likewise for my country's benefit, I mean to better the unskillful in knowledge, I have thought it good to open plainly the best grounds,

[Folio A3 recto]

which belong to our English weapons, that are now in use, so far as my simple invention by great practice has attained unto. Another reason which moved me hereunto was where some do find out many hidden secrets which they bury in the earth again with their bodies, or else if they make it known, it shall be to such a faithful friend as they love and affect dearly, all writers that ever wrote did write either for profit or pleasure: some to profit others, and some to pleasure themselves; and some have written common and necessary things for their own posterity after them; I write but of common things, yet not so common as necessary, and therefore my meaning is to make my secret study known so plainly as I can unto all the world, for the benefit of many thousand yet unborn, for every man has or should have skill in his weapons, the reasons shall follow, as occasion shall serve hereafter more at large; but as yet I know the greatest number are blinded in an ignorant conceit, I mean such as do think to overcome their enemies if occasion does serve by quickness of the eye, or by a kind of valorous resolution, which for the avoiding of this and such like abuses, I have here and there put down sundry reasons in this book, although they are not in order, yet take a little pains to seek them out, for I wrote this book at such leasurable fits as time would permit me; now for affection's sake some will say it is well done, and others again will say it is reasonable and indifferent, and so I pray you let it pass, for if I should perceive it should go for stark naught, then should I account my time and labor very ill bestowed; but yet this I know, if it were ten times worse than it is, yet would it be welcome to a number of my old friends and familiar acquaintances, such as were the cause of this my idle time spending, who were earnest with me for the setting forth of this work. Lo this is the anchor whereon my hope depends, but yet I make a doubt lest that my book may light into the hands of some envious mates, who never knew me, yet will not stick to say upon the very first sight, oh this is such a man's work, I know well enough what he could do, and yet will not fully give up their verdict, but only shake the head, with a wry mouth and a smiling countenance, throwing it from them, and so seeming by their silence that they could further

[Folio A3 verso]

disgrace me, but will not. Indeed it is a more easier matter for such to find fault with a part of my book than to amend the whole, but I could wish such learn before they take upon them to control, but those which are wise and kind, will accept of my good will, for I have given out this but as a theme; let a wiser than I rhyme upon it, and although it seems but as it were a glimpse of the noble art of defense, in regard of the substance, yet some will perceive day at a little hole; wherefore travel further in it, till you find out the substance, like a good surgeon searches the wound to the bottom before thou lay a plaster, I mean read it over before thou give judgment; and then play the wise man's part which is to speak little, although he thinks much; indeed I must confess a vanity in myself and that I have deserved blame, because so bluntly I have set forth such an unperfect piece of work, but my reasons in the latter end of the book may a little excuse me, but in the meanwhile let it be never the worse welcome unto thee, for that it has my poor name unto it, I speak this because I know there are some will speak they care not what, to disgrace they know not whom, without rendering any reason at all, but only out of a dogged humor, or an idle brain, some finding fault with the guards, and some because I have written of things which belong not to the matter or ground of this work, and some because *it is a book of pictures*, accounting a book of pictures fit for children and fools; to answer such I say when a child or a fool does look in a glass, he does think there is a baby on the other side, but when men of discretion look in a glass, they do not think so; therefore as by the heathen we may learn many good lessons, even so a man of understanding may learn wisdom, and gain experience of a fool; I wrote not this altogether to pleasure those that are skillful already, for this book can stead them but little, for the whole and sound need not a physician, but the ignorant and unskillful may profit by this book as much if with discretion they take regard in their practice according to my direction, as if myself were in person to teach them, but both the skillful, and unskillful, the wise and the foolish may here learn one lesson or other, which they never learned before; yet I know not how every one will take this my presumption, in adventuring

to set out a book having no learning, yet I pray you read it over first, and then judge, but yet be slow in condemning me, for I have done my good will, now he which can make a simple thing better, he ought so to handle the matter, that although he gets credit himself, yet condemn not me for showing the best I could; therefore so judge of me behind my back as you would have others judge of you, but if you judge well and like well of it, then shall you have the second part with six weapons more, but I will first see what will become of this first part, let it commend or condemn itself, for great braggers cannot better it, nor dissembling speeches impair it, neither will I maintain for well done, all that I have done, but if you accept it then I have all my desire, if otherwise good will shall bear the blame for my presumption: but why do I make a dought⁵ of any evil speeches, which deserve no blame, again this I know that there are none which stand in so much need of good words as those which go about to cover dishonest deeds, wherefore I may say as that great Captain *Marius* who having occasion to use a speech before the people of Rome, in his conclusion he said, although my words are not well set in order I weigh not so much so that my deeds be good.⁶

I have made this of brick and stones, as *Augustus* said of *Rome* at the first, but now Rome is built with marble: even so I would wish that some expert and learned person or other would pull down this rude begun work of mine and build it up with marble, for the work itself if it were workmanlike handled, deserves to be written in letters of gold, and to remain forever, but first it must be twice or thrice distilled as they do their *rosasolis*,⁷ for first it is *aqua vitæ*, and then in the second and third distillation, there is bestowed greater charge and more excellent matter arises of it.

I have but roved at skill in weapons, yet I am sure that I have shot so near the mark that some will account me for a good archer, otherwise they would never have been so important with me to have me put my directions in writing, and when it was in writing so many desired copies, that amongst so many friends I knew not which to pleasure first, but especially and above all the late high and mighty Prince *Henry* whom I well

⁵ “make a dought” The word “dought” was a dialectic spelling of the word “dow”, which meant to have worth or value. So his meaning here is why would he place value in evil speeches.

⁶ Caius Marius (c.157 b.c.- 86 b.c.). The speech is attributed to Marius by Sallust in his work, *The Jugurthine War*, chapter 85.

⁷ Rosa solis was a distilled “cordial water” used as an alcoholic drink and often thought to be an aphrodisiac, according to the website Historic Food (<http://www.historicfood.com/rosolio.htm> accessed 5/16/2014).

hoped that he should have lived to have been the ninth *Henry* and the tenth worthy of the world, for what did any of the other nine worthies do, but this good prince was as likely, if he had lived to have performed as much as any of them; for what has been done but may be done again. But as I was about to say, this good prince had the perusing of this book and earnestly persuaded me to print it, but I had not leisure to finish it before death untimely took him away to my grief and many more, for all the whole kingdom was nothing but mourning. Death were kind if he took none, but those which offended, but oh most unkind death, for thou in taking away that good young prince, has taken away him which never offended, for there was never the like seen in one so young, for his wisdom, learning, and kind courtesy, to all which came to see his princely self, talking so mildly and familiarly to every one which did so rejoice and glad the hearts of all true and loving subjects, and also caused him in his fame to be spoken of, for kings and princes are talked of at poor men's tables, and good words he deserved, as ever any earthly creature did. For besides his skill in music, he was able by his learning to discourse with any foreign prince whatsoever, also his admirable and well riding of a great horse, and his excellent running at tilt or ring; likewise his cunning in weapons, for the fight on horseback or on foot, and for tossing the pike never so many feats seen in any prince, insomuch that it made strangers stand amazed to behold him; at a word he had experience in all arts or sciences, thereby seeming as it were desirous to trust more to his own valor, if occasion served, than to the goodness of his horse. And so to make an end lest of the ignorant I get the name of a claw-black, and also another doubt I have, lest undertaking so difficult a task, and being not able to discharge it according unto the dignity and worthiness thereof, the which I cannot do, and therefore I will not wade so far in so dangerous a river, but that I may easily escape out, wherefore like the finger of a dial I will point, it must be the clock which tells you the just time of the day, I have drawn His Highness in bare colors, and so I leave the oily colors unto those which are learned, you may see by a taste what wine is in the butte, and so

[Folio C recto]

to our matter again. Now he which will practice after my direction, thou may a little rather attain unto that perfect knowledge in the art or skill with thy weapons having an able body by agility to preserve that skill which I have here in this book laid open unto thee, for I did understand many things which my body was not able to perform; now because many at the first will wax weary in their practice, yet such weariness is overcome by often exercise, and that new skill once obtained will be such a pleasure to thee, that it puts all weariness out of thy remembrance, now until thou have skill thou must not think it a toil, but strive continually to overcome weariness: resolve this with thy self, that the pain will be nothing so wearisome as the gain of skill will be delightful and comfortable unto thee, and commendable amongst others: I have made it as plain and laid it as open as I can express by words, because I would have every man expert in weapons, considering that skill in weapons is so honorable and so precious a thing, that in my mind it may be preferred next unto divinity, for as divinity preserves the souls of those which follow it, from Hell and the devil, so does this noble and worthy art of defense defend the body from hurts and scars of those which learn it, but those which neither follow the one nor learn the other, the first sort for ought I know may go throw fire brands in Hell, and the second sort may sit in an alehouse, and there show how many hurts, and likewise tell how many wounds he has about his body; for I have known many brag of their hurts, and in my conceit they take a pride in that they have stood so near the point of a weapon, whereby to receive wounds, therefore they are willing that the world should know how venturous they have been, but now in my mind if they had skill they need not be hurt: wherefore skill is not only available to preserve and keep the body without hurts and wounds, but also the use and practice with weapons, does drive away all aches, griefs, and diseases, it removes congealed blood, and breaks impostumes, it makes the body nimble, and pliant, it sharpens the wit, it increases the sight, and procures strength, and expels melancholy and cholerickness, and many other evil conceits, it keeps a man in breath, in perfect

Give not over practice nor reject not skill because thou cannot be a master of art, or a doctor at the first day, for time must work and bring all things to pass, for that is well done which is done by leisure, for haste many times makes waste.

[Folio C verso]

health, it makes him to be of long life which uses it, it is unto him which has the perfect skill in weapons, a most friendly, and comfortable companion, when he is alone, having but only his weapons about him, it puts him out of all fear, and in the wars and places of most danger it makes a man bold, hardy, valiant, and venturous.⁸ Wherefore they that are once experienced in the skill of weapons will afterwards to the end of their lives encourage the unskillful to learn still, considering how necessary a thing skill in weapons is, insomuch that God and nature tolerate the practice of this skill in weapons, which is here meant for the defense of man's body, it also preserves many from murder,⁹ also in the wars it may likewise stead a king, gentleman, or any other private soldier; for if in the wars a single combat is desired, as that of *Goliath*, there started out of the army a *David* who with a godly valor stood in the gap, for the good and preservation of many men's lives, which no doubt else had perished in that great and dangerous battle. Therefore it behooves kings being challenged by their equals for the safeguard and good of their subjects and country, to adventure and hazard their own lives in hope of a conquest, so that thereby the wars may cease.

Some there are which take delight to talk of the art of defense, and yet have no insight nor judgment therein, the proverb is verified in such which goes thus, there are some which talk of *Robin Hood* which never shot in his bow, I speak this because a gentleman on a time came to my school and would not play by no means, yet he was busy with his tongue in teaching others, and in discoursing of several weapons, and several guards, but by his words he betrayed his small judgment, for his speech sounded to no sense nor reason, and so I being weary with hearing him talk so long, and far from the mark which he aimed at, so at length I rounded him in the ear, thus, hold your peace, or else speak softly, for my usher laughs you to scorn. But we will to our matter again, and draw to a conclusion of this epistle, for the necessary use of weapons. In *Luke* the twelve there the Lord as it seems did think them to be more better than a coat upon a man's back, he therefore bade his disciples generally, go said he, sell your coats and buy you

⁸ This passage, beginning on the previous page with the reference to divinity and much embellished, is taken from the "Admonition" of George Silver's *Paradoxes of Defence*, page 2.

⁹ This seems to be a rather butchered paraphrasing of George Hale's dedicatory epistle, where he says, "And since Innocence is no protection against murtherous Intents, God and Nature tollerate this Defence."

[Folio C2 recto]

swords, he spoke not this to one of them alone, but unto them all.¹⁰

Now the kingly prophet *David* teaches you where to wear your swords, saying gird thy sword on thy thigh, he does not bid thee wear it about thy neck in a string, even so as the Lord in many places of the Bible is said to be of many professions, for he is called a shepherd, a husbandman, a physician, and *David* in his 144. Psalm, in a manner calls him a fencer, for there he says that the Lord did teach his hands to war, and his fingers to fight: He also says in another of his Psalms, I am a worm and no man,¹¹ and yet I fear not what man can do unto me.¹² Other examples bending to this purpose hereafter shall follow more at large, some in one chapter, and some in another, as they come in my mind, and although it has been my study and practice this twenty years, yet now I have unfolded every place, and shown every wrinkle of these few weapons, so far as my invention has attained unto, and I have set them down so large and made them so plain, as by words I could any way express them, so that thou may learn them in twenty days and less, if not all, yet enough for the sure defense of thy body, and the rest shall follow in a second book hereafter, if thou do friendly accept of this.

In the mean time arm thy mind to these weapons here following, for they are sufficient for thy defense at single combat, also here thou shall find other lessons no less profitable than delightful, if thou with content peruse them, and so I will hinder thee no longer from that which ensues, and therefore ending my epistle with these words of the friar, who often in his sermon said the best is behind, so he that reads but the beginning of a book, can give no judgment of that which ends; then read it over, and thou shall not be deluded with the best is behind.

I hope I may call this book a book without any offense, for the collier he calls his horse a horse, and the Spanish Jennet is but a horse. Now as this art is called a noble art, and not so named unfittingly, being rightly understood, for there is no art nor science more to be preferred before this, for that there is none that jumps in equality, nor that matches in singularity

¹⁰ This passage is from Luke 22:36, not chapter twelve.

¹¹ Psalms 22:6.

¹² Psalms 118:6, and Psalms 56:11.

[Folio C2 verso]

or that has so many sundry subtle devices and ingenious inventions, as this noble art of defense has. Now he that does but read of this art, yea although he reads never so much, yet without practice and by experience in trial, it will be unperfect, for how can perfection be attained but by practice, and therefore it also behooves thee to use practice with sundry men, and so to make use of the diversity of each man's skill, and then for thy benefit, like the wise physician who of many simples makes one compound, or as the bee which by her serious industry gathers virtue from sundry sorts of herbs and flowers, and thereof makes her honey, she is not therefore to be condemned of envy, but rather to be commended of all.

Neither do I write this book altogether to profit those in learning that which they before wanted, but only to set them and other willing minds awork which by art and learning can better swim through such a deep river than I can, it should have been better if my learning had been answerable to my will, yet hoping that the wise will rather wink at small faults, than rashly reprove that which may profit the simple, for all have not skill and cunning alike, I am persuaded that some will the rather pass it over with patience, although it is but only for affection to the art, and so hoping that this my work may be profitable to all, for so it can no way be hurtful to none, but if you chance to meet with this book after he has served out the apprenticeship of seven years, if God grants me life so long you shall see him in double apparel, and then you shall have just cause to say that his master has fulfilled his covenants, for I wish all men well, and every one an increase of skill in all laudable and profitable arts or sciences, and so with this long entry into a little parlor, I leave you to Him whose seat is in Heaven, and whose foot-stool is the Earth. And rest,

Thine in the Lord,

Joseph Swetnam.

[Folio C3 recto]

**Unto all professors of the noble and
worthy art of defense I
send greeting.**

Most noble brethren by profession, and brethren in Christ by religion, wishing all health and happiness to all them of the noble art or science of defense; and as your profession is noble, so in brotherly love, I do earnestly request you all to use it in that noble fashion, as the name or title requires, the rather, and for because you are men, not only noted and talked of, but often looked on and more pointed at, than any other ordinary men are, of what profession soever. Also it is the world's wonder, to see a man of civil government using this profession, therefore I pray you consider with me a little, that we are as a beacon set on a hill, or like a candle in a candlestick; then let not your candle be made with a great wick, and no tallow, but let him be so mixed with both, that your light may so shine before men, that they seeing your discreet government and good behavior may (by your good examples) reform many ill infirmities which they see in themselves. Alas, I pray you consider and remember, that as the tree grows, so he falls; we are not born for ourselves, but for our country: and if we do no good, though we do no harm, then better it were that we had never been born. The fig tree in the Gospel, is said to trouble the ground, because he bears no fruit, and therefore better an addle egg than an ill bird; for a good and a godly life, has a good and a godly end, and an ungodly life has an ungodly end: and therefore most happy dies that man, of whom the world doubts not of his salvation, although the world is given to speak well and charitably of the wicked when they are dead, and yet it may be they think in their

[Folio C3 verso]

minds they are gone to Hell; then call to mind, and wisely consider of this, and also of your end, and in what great jeopardy your lives stand; for he that today is well, lusty, and strong, may the next day, nay, the next hour, have his life taken suddenly from him at unawares, when he least thinks on it, for many of this profession do not live out half their days, for there are many ways to bring a man to his end, some by quarrelling when they have no cause, and so are stabbed suddenly, and some by drunkenness, as you shall hear anon; for I could write of many which came to their ends, and yet died not all in their beds, nor all in the wars, nor all at the gallows, and yet many of them have gone these ways: for there are wicked and evil angels which are the waiters, and do attend upon an ungodly life, for death respects no manner of person, for he does assault the skillful so well as the ignorant, the wise so well as the foolish, and therefore it is good for every man to be prepared and in a readiness, and then he needs not to fear to say, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly*; today or tomorrow, or when Thou wilt, and with what manner of death soever, so it come by Thine appointment.

And now (for example's sake) I think it not amiss to renew your remembrance with the death of some few of the noble science, because I have known their ends; and first, to begin with that one of Master *Turner*, which should be the last, he did not so speedily kill *John Dun*, with a thrust in the eye, but he was as soon murdered afterwards, with a shot of a pistol; for neither of them, after they had their death's wound, spoke one word; lo, by this you may see, that some hawks are but a flight, and some horses are killed with a tournie, and a man is but a shot: but now, by reason that Master *Turner*, by his unlucky hand, thrust out two or three eyes, and because none others are known to do the like, it has therefore bred an admiration in the ignorant and vulgar sort, insomuch, that generally they do applaud him with this commendation, saying that he has not left the like behind him, nor never will be the like again: but this is a great error in thinking so, and far deceived are they; for I well knew Master *Turner* by familiar acquaintance, and therefore (to speak the right) he was a worthy fellow and deserved well, but yet I know many which can go so near the eye as ever he could do, if they so listed, as in this book you shall see many false thrusts at several weapons, which may

endanger any man's eyes, if those which learn them do carry envious minds, or if they were desirous to work a man such a mischief, but God forbid that any man should be so ill minded. I will not say, but that by chance such a thing may be done, and so it may be that Master *Turner* did it more by chance, without any intention; for so some do judge of it: but if a man chops a thrust at the face, yet, by chance, he may hit the eye; for no man is certain, that with the first thrust he will hit the eye, but with proffering many, by chance he may; now the use which we ought to make of this, is, to advise all men to take heed that they bear not a killing heart, for then we shall have no killing hand, as that example more of *Henry Adlington* for killing his master *John Devell*, was hanged: *Furlong* he drank a pint of aqua vitæ at one draught, and he fell down and died presently: *Westcoat*, for some unkindness received of his own daughter, he went into a wood near in *Perine*¹³ *Cornwall*, and there hanged himself: *Richard Caro*, he died most miserably of the French disease¹⁴ in an old house near *Plymouth*, although he had a new suit of clothes from top to toe, yet he was so loathsome a creature, that nobody would let him harbor in his house, for part of his body was rotten and stunk above ground: also old *Carter* of *Worcester* lay a long time sick of a lingering disease, and being worn away to nothing but skin and bones, he died in his bed: and so of many more I could write, but it is not my intention to write a chronicle, and therefore these few shall serve for this time, I wrote it but only to put you in mind, that you may so lead your lives daily and hourly, as if death were even at your heels, and so to live as though you should live forever, always keeping something for a rainy day, as says the proverb, that is to say, for sickness, if God does send it, and for old age, when your aching bones do refuse to perform that labor which the heart is willing to set them to.

Therefore I would wish every one, in his youth, to provide and get himself a homely home, and to settle in one good town or other, for a rolling stone gathers no moss; the grasshopper cannot live but in the grass, and the salamander dies if he goes out of the fire: therefore, spend not thy time in travel from place to place, but keep thy homely home, and there begin thy spending as thou may continue, cutting thy coat according to thy cloth, and not spending all at one time, and have nothing at another to serve thy turn, as many of all professions do.

¹³ Perhaps modern day Porthperan.

¹⁴ syphilis

Wherefore, you young branches of this noble art of defense, of you I mean to speak, and unto you I do make this earnest request, that you will bestow all your idle time, which too too many spend in idle company, and in drunkenness, such ill spent time, I could wish, that it were either bestowed in reading of good books, or in giving good counsel unto such young men as do frequent your company, teaching them besides skill with weapons, how to manage their weapons, and how, and when to appoint the field, but not upon every drunken quarrel, and chiefly of all, charging them from profaning the Sabbath day, drunkenness, and all other vices belonging thereunto, which make their white souls so black an ink, stinking before God as it were the smoke of sulphur and brimstone: and thus doing will purchase you, not only the love of God, but likewise of all the world, and your good report will be in every man's mouth, yea it will go before you in your travels, like as with an herald of arms, or else like a speedy post, overtake you wheresoever you go, whereas on the contrary side, those which do spend their days in drunkenness, and leading their lives lasciviously one misfortune or other happens unto them, either by the loss of a limb, or by the loss of an eye, or by the loss of their lives.

For I have known many very skillful men not only of this profession, but likewise of others, which delight in ungodliness, drunkenness, and being put to trial in their art or profession, they have received disgrace and lost the day, and they afterwards have thought that they made a good excuse, in saying that they were in drink when they went about their business, and yet it may be it was not so, but admit it was so, then is it mere madness, that any man should be so foolish in taking too much drink when beforehand he knows this is the day, wherein I am to stand upon my credit; now because I know, that many will read this besides those unto whom it is dedicated: therefore I wish all men, of what profession soever, to make this reckoning (as aforesaid) every day, and not to be forgetful of that which he should chiefly remember; for every day one time of the day or other thou may be put so to thy shifts, and thereby have an occasion to summon up all thy wits, and driven to use thy best skill, and yet all little enough to serve thy turn.

Wherefore unto you which this any way may concern, I wish you to apply yourselves unto your profession, and still to be studying and practicing the true and perfect rules belonging both to the true and false

[Folio D recto]

play, especially unto such weapons as you are not grown unto the full perfection beforehand, if they may serve either for the wars or for single combat.

Be not wise in thine own conceit,¹⁵ in thinking that thou have learned all the skill which is possible to be learned already, far deceived are thou if thou think so, for if thou live till thou are old, yet thou may learn still, for one guard crosses another, and the false play crosses the true play; there are many secret slips and guards to be invented, and one guard or one trick may more stead thee, and more prevail against some men than another; for when with plain play, thou cannot endanger thy enemy, yet with false play thou may hit him, for although thy enemy does know the defense of some manner of false play, yet it may be he is not acquainted, neither with the defense nor offense of thine, for there are more ways to the wood than one, and he which knows many ways, may go the nearest.

Even so, he that knows many guards, and the true skill at many weapons may be the better able to answer any stout bragging foreigner or stranger when they come with their challenges into our country, let them be of what nation soever, and at what weapons they will, and upon what terms they dare, as hitherto they have been sufficiently answered during my time, by Master *Mathews*, Master *Turner*, Master *Bradshaw*, and Master *Yates*; for these chiefly stood to stake against all comers, and yet I cannot choose but remember Master *Church*, and Master *Brentley*, who of this latter time have deserved to be well reported of, and for aught that I could ever hear or see any get at any of their hands, they have small cause to brag of their winning, for they always went away with shrewd shrubs and knocks, I mean with black eyes, broken shins, or cracked pates; but of myself I will say little, because the world is sufficiently satisfied of more than at this time I mean to write of now,¹⁶ although the ignorant cannot answer them for want of skill and judgment, yet they will rejoice and clap their hands to see them answered by sufficient and able men of valor and judgment.

Now if any should ask my reason, why some should have such good fortune, and othersome disgraced, and yet by the world's judgment their skill equal; because you shall not muse long about it, I will quickly tell you my opinion, good government and good carriage is the main point

¹⁵ Romans 12:16

¹⁶ Whether Swetnam is referring to the scandal surrounding his *Arraignment of Women*, or his reputation as a Master of Defense is uncertain, though I have encountered no mention of him as a master of defense outside of the play.

[Folio D verso]

thereof, yet me thinks amongst the vulgar sort I hear some say, because two or three famous fellows are dead, that there will never be the like again: but far deceived are they which think so, for there have not been so good, but there may come so good again: for as yet I never knew any man but he had met with his match, and therefore I wish every one not to presume one step the higher, for any gift that God bestows on thee, neither to think thy self better than any man, though there are some which, for want of discretion, will disable others, only to magnify themselves, and thinking thereby to make the world believe there is none so good as they. Lo, this is the cause of many quarrels, and sometimes murders: Therefore speak not evil behind the back of any man, nor dispraise no man's play nor workmanship, be it never so simple, do not like other tradesmen, which cannot live one by another, but with a kind of grudging hatred, as the hatter against the hatter, the shoemaker against the shoemaker, and the tailor would even hang the tailor by his good will, and so of all trades the like, but I would gladly wish it otherwise of all trades, but especially of this profession, to be loving and kind to one another, meeting together in their travels, and like birds of a feather hold together, and in brotherly love embrace one another, and let it not be from the teeth outward, but from the heart inward, for you shall have many others which will undermine you, and creep into your secrets, and so run betwixt one another with tattling tales, only to set you together by the ears, and then laugh at you when they have done: Lo, thus an evil tongue is the cause of many a man's death: wherefore leave and forsake all evil vices, though you fear not man in respect of your manhood, yet fear to offend God for doubt of his judgments, which undoubtedly light upon all those that carelessly forget him.

For, as the greatest honor that ever came to man, was through skill in weapons, and the greatest downfall that ever came to man, was through pride of his manhood, and in neglecting his duty towards God: wherefore, as you worthily carry the style or title of Masters of Defense by your profession, then be the same you seem to be, I mean, never leave studying and practicing till you come to the ground, and until you have sounded into the depth of your art, for there are many other principal points belonging to the wars, besides, march, troupe, charge, and stand; even so unto a Master of Defense belongs the

[Folio D2 recto]

skill of many other weapons, besides the backword, sword and dagger, rapier and dagger, and the staff: for, if he is not provided with the skill of many other weapons, he may be to seek of his defense, if he should be challenged unto some other weapons which he is unacquainted withal.

Then he is not worthy to be called a Master of Defense, which cannot defend himself at all weapons, especially against every ordinary man not professing the art of defense, nor except he can play with a lion, as well as with a lamb, and sometimes again to play the lamb so well as the lion; for he that cannot tell when to spare, and when to strike; and he which cannot defend himself, cannot teach others to defend themselves, nor is he not worthy to be called a Master of Defense, but he that can do it is worthy of that title; and therefore greatly wronged of them which will call such a one a fencer, for the difference betwixt a Master of Defense, and a fencer, is as much as between a musician and a fiddler, or betwixt a merchant and a peddler; it will not well please a merchant to be called peddler, yet the merchant sells the like wares as the peddler does: is therefore a merchant and a peddler all one? No more is every fencer a Master of Defense; nor every fiddler has not skill in prick song, and therefore no musician; if a man have but ten shillings worth of pins, points, and inkle, he may then be called a peddler, but he that has a hundred sorts of wares, shall scarce get the name to be called a merchant, no more can he which has gotten a little more skill at three or four weapons than every common man, yet he may be to seek of the true skill of many other weapons which belong unto a Master of Defense.

Yet one thing more, which I had almost forgotten; unto scholars and unto ushers of schools of this profession, proffer no wrong to your masters neither in word nor deed, nor deny not your tutors, but bear a hearty love unto him which has brought you from nothing to something, from a shadow unto a substance; let not the priest forget that he was a clerk. I have known many scholars so good as their master, and (it may be) better, according to the proverb, a man may make his own dog bite him; but in my mind, such a dog is worthy of a rope: make the application as you see occasion. For I have known many an ungrateful knave escape the gallows, by the means of an honest-minded man; yet such a knave (upon small or no occasion)

[Folio D2 verso]

has afterwards gone about to hang such a friend if he could, even so, some young lusty scholars, when they have gotten perfect skill, for lack of wit, would offer to wrong their aged master, if they could: it is not strange to find one scabbed sheep in a whole flock; nor it is no news amongst many honest men, to find a treacherous varlet, void of all honesty, fear, and wit. Now having no warrant to force you to follow my counsel, but only in brotherly love, I thought good to request you, and every of you, to amend one; and God amend us all, He I mean, whose seat is in Heaven, and whose footstool is the Earth.

Your well-willing friend,

Joseph Swetnam.

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[Chapter I]

This first chapter shows what weapons are chiefly to be learned, with many other principal notes worthy of observation.

Because old weapons lie rusty in a corner, and every man is desirous of the newest fashion of weapons, especially if they seem to be of more danger to the enemy than the old, therefore it is my intent and purpose at this time to express and set down both the true and false play principally of the rapier and dagger, and staff, for I hold that the skill of these two weapons are chiefly and necessary of every man to be learned, for to have the use of a rapier to ride with, and a staff to walk afoot withal, for those which have the skill of these two weapons may safely encounter against any man having any other weapon whatsoever as hereafter you shall be sufficiently satisfied.

But first a word by the way in commendations of those two weapons, this I can say and by good experience I speak it, that he which has a rapier and a close-hilted dagger, and skill withal to use him has great odds against the sword and dagger, or sword and

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buckler, and the like I do affirm of a staff against all long weapons; my reasons shall follow anon; but first I will speak more in commendations of the rapier and dagger, note it well, for it is the finest and the comeliest weapon that ever was used in *England*, for so much cunning to this weapon belongs as to no weapon the like: wherefore I would wish all gentlemen and others, not only to learn the true and perfect skill thereof, but also to practice it often. For there is no exercise in the world so healthful to the body, and the skill of it a sure defense for the same, likewise it also behooves every man to be well instructed in this weapon, the rather, and for because it is a weapon which for the most part all outlandish men do use; wherefore being unprepared thou may be the better able to answer them at their own weapon either in single combat or otherwise, but if thou delay thy practice till thou have need, then I say at the very time of need it will be too late, and little available to thee, for being learned in such haste it is soon forgotten, and he which never learned, but does trust to his own cunning may soon lose his life, for there are but two ways for the doing of every thing: that is to say either a good or a bad, and commonly by nature every man has the worst way; both at this exercise and so at all others the like, but the best way being learned, by a little practice keeps it so perfect, that it is never forgotten again.

A physician is but little regarded, but in the time of sickness, even so the practicing of skill is not remembered until a man has need to use it. *Plato* was a divine, yet he so highly esteemed the art or skill in weapons, insomuch that he commanded that children

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should learn so soon as they are able,¹⁷ and *Cyrus* said that skill in weapons was as necessary as husbandry; but now when you have the true and perfect skill, be not over rash nor take not exceptions at every light occasion, but only by good advise to use it, in cases of necessity; revenge not every small wrong, nor quarrel not upon every light occasion, for the strongest and the richest man that is, must pocket up an injury at sometimes, then be not hasty in thy wrath, but pause although thy weapon is drawn, for the thrust being given, and the blow once fallen, it will be too late then to repent; wherefore be valiant, but yet not too venturous, so fight as thou may fight again, for the hasty man never wants woe, and he which will quarrel for a small matter trusting unto his own manhood, yet for all his skill and courage, may oftentimes meet with his match, and so carry away the blows with dishonor.

For a small or a bad quarrel has many times ill success, therefore let thy quarrel be grounded upon a good foundation, for then it half defends itself, but if it is upon drink or in defense of a lewd woman, such quarrels are naught, and have ill success; again have this care, never be proud of thy skill, but go as if thou had it not, except occasion serves: but be not lifted up with a proud mind one step the higher, for courtesy wins favor with all men; wherefore always so frame your speech and answers, that there never grows any quarrel upon a foolish word or a froward answer.

And furthermore, have this skill in thy memory, so rule thy tongue as never to speak ill, whether it is true or false behind the back of any man, for if the

He that to wrath
and anger is thrall,
ever his wits have
no power at all

A quarrel is
oftentimes begun
without discretion.

¹⁷ Plato's *Laws*, book 7, sections 813d ff.

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party spoken of is not in presence, yet he may hear of it, and thou may be called in question for the same when thou think least upon it, yea although thou suppose that thou speak it to thy friend, for I have known many which to magnify themselves would boast and brag of their own manhood, and disable others, which were far better men than themselves; thinking never to hear of it again; but this one folly has been the cause of many quarrels, and thereof springs deadly hatred, and sometimes murders. Yet I do advise all men if indiscreet words do pass from the mouth of the simple for lack of wit (but I will not say for lack of drink) but whether it is drink or mere foolishness, revenge not every wrong, but first consider the worth and quality of the party which has wronged thee, for if he is a desperate person, or one which has nothing to lose, nor wife nor children to care for, some such there are that are desperate, and care not if they were out of the world, as our proverb says, hab or nab, fall back fall edge, they care not whose house is on fire, for they have nothing to lose, now although thou have the perfect skill with thy weapons, yet fight not with such rascals, nor with none upon every small wrong; for so thou may be accounted careless and bloody minded, as though *Mars* the God of battle were thy father, or thinking thy self to be more mighty than *Hercules*, or as one altogether forgetting that which so oft has been seen, that a little wretch of stature by skill, judgment, and reason, has subdued and overcome a far more mightier man of person¹⁸ than himself.

Be valiant but not
too venturous.

For he that is well instructed in the perfect skill with his weapon
although but small of stature, and

As that of *David*
he overcame great
Goliath.

¹⁸ The original printing had “petson”, which I interpreted to be a typographical error for “person.”

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weak of strength, may with a little moving of his foot or a sudden turning of his hand, or with the quick agility of his body kill and bring to the ground the tall and strongest man that is.¹⁹

Now before thou go into the field to fight, first of all put God before, and use thy devotion to Him privately, and commit thy self wholly to His mercy, because He redeemed thee, and the victory lies in Him, if thy skill and cunning were never so good; for if thou go with a sure hope and trust in God, and thy quarrel good, and some skill withal, then fight and fear not, and although at the first it will be fearful to most men, being but once experienced therein, it will encourage and make a man bold, yet take this by the way, and note it well, for skill makes some men towards, for if thou learn the best skill thou can, and in a fence school meet with one that is so good, and cunning as thy self, such a one will hit thee sometimes in spite of thy teeth, the which hit makes some think with themselves, I did now lie in as sure a guard as I could for my life, and yet if I had been in the field this hit might have killed me.

But I say there is great odds betwixt fighting in the field and playing in a fence school, for in the field being both sober, I mean if it is in a morning upon cold blood, then every man will as much fear to kill as to be killed, again a man shall see to defend either blow or thrust in the field than in a fence school, for a man will be more bold with a foil or a cudgel, because there is small danger in either of them.

But when they come to tell their tale at the point of a rapier, they will stand off for their own safety; go not into the field in the afternoon, partly for the

Forget ne'er this lesson.

Fear not if thou have skill to answer a good quarrel for it's better die like a horse in battle than live like a hog in a stie.

¹⁹ This passage is taken from Vincentio Saviolo's book, *His Practise*, folio B verso.

[Folio E2 verso]

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avoiding of the common speech of those which will say it is a drunken match, neither go not presently upon the sudden falling out; for cholera overcomes the wits of many a man, for in a mad fury skill is little thought upon, and therefore very dangerous to both; for although thy memory serves thee well; and so thou being careful and not bearing any mind to kill, yet thy enemy if he is but a rank coward, upon drink or fury, or upon hot blood, will be so desperate, that if you favor him he will endanger thee.

There is seldom or never any quarrel begun but in an afternoon, for then commonly the drink is in and the wit is out, although thou know thy self in good case, and not to have received more drink than to suffice thy want, yet do thou not know how little drink will overcome the wits of another man; and this I know, and by good experience I speak it, there is no odds during the time betwixt a mad man and a drunkard.

Never jest with edged tools, nor play not the fool with thy weapons, but keep them to defend thy self when occasion shall require thee, or at such time as thou shall be oppressed, for many hurts and much mischief has been done by over-much folly in jesting with weapons, when at the beginning there was no harm meant.

Ever refer the quarrel to be tried in the morning, for then thy adversary so well as thy self being in cold blood, skill avails, and he which the night before would seem to fight with the devil, will in the morning be as cold as a clock; for then it is the nature of every man as well to fear to kill, as to be killed, and so thou by skill may fight long without danger, and

[Folio E3 recto]
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fight with many, and have no hurt.

When thou go into the field, note the sun, for if it does shine, it may annoy thee; but get thy back toward the sun, and so traverse the ground, that thine enemy gets not about thee, so shall thou always keep his face in the sun, which will so annoy him, that he cannot make play to endanger thee. But if there is no sun to trouble thee, then make choice of the lowest ground, for he which has the lowest ground, has the greatest advantage. Also take heed that thou strike not with thy rapier, for so thou may break it, and bring thy self to thine enemy's mercy, and it may be he will take the advantage of thee: If thy rapier falls out of thy hand, take thy dagger by the point, and make an offer to throw it, for that will so dare thine enemy, that he will stand until thou have taken up thy weapon again.²⁰

But if thou recover thine enemy's weapons, (as I have known many let fall their weapons in fight) give it not to him again; if thou mean to fight with him any more for that time; for, to unarm thy enemy, is more credit to thee, than to kill him. Never lend a weapon to fight against thy self, for these two follies have been the end of many good men's lives; if thine enemy falls, hurt him, if he will not yield up his weapon, but kill him not, though his life does lie in thine hands, but if thou spare him, fight with him no more for that time; for I have known many that might first have killed, but by sparing their enemies, have been killed themselves; if thine enemy's weapon breaks, then there is favor to be shown: but these two last points are to be conditioned upon. When any two Gentlemen, or other, whatsoever,

Of all dangers the least is to be chosen, and the greatest to be avoided: defend not one place, and leave the rest of the body unguarded.

Take heed of ignorance's pitfall, for fear lest you fall into the springle with the wood cock.

²⁰ This is an interesting direction, when juxtaposed with Swetnam's later criticism, on page 73, that throwing a weapon is a coward's trick.

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shall have occasion to fight, yet it is not amiss, at their meeting in the field, for the one of them to say before they begin, show me that favor which thou would have thy self, that is, if I fall, or my weapon breaks, stay thy hands, and I will do the like. Have always as great care to save the life of thy enemy as of thine own, fearing more the judgments of God, than the laws of the realm. Likewise, never be too earnest in persuading a coward to go with thee into the field to fight; for I have known a gull that would abuse a man in words behind his back, but when he has been called to account for it, by the party grieved, he durst not answer him in the field, yet by earnest provoking, has gone and put a far better man than himself to the worst.

Therefore I hold it very unfortunate to persuade any man too too earnestly, to go into the field to fight against his will; neither go into the field with every rascal, for thou do hazard thy self, and get no credit, wherefore, if such a one does challenge thee, if thou can conveniently, break his pate, for he is worthy of somewhat for his forwardness, but to answer him otherwise, let this excuse privilege thee; say thou scorn to do him that credit. Let thy rapier be of a reasonable length, rather too long than too short, four feet at the least, except thine enemy does give or send thee the length of his weapon; then it is a point of manhood to match him as near as thou can: always let thine enemy tell his tale at the point of thy weapon; but trust him not to whisper with thee, lest he shall stab thee, or else by strength recover thy own weapon, and so do thee a mischief before thou are aware; keep clean thy

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rapier; remember that of *Alexander*, how he cashiered²¹ a soldier out of his army, because he was making clean of his armor, even then when he should have used it. Likewise there is a proverb, a workman is known by his tools: then if thou have skill to use thy weapons, let it appear by the cleanly keeping of them, then leave not thy rapier in a wet scabbard, when thou come to thy journey's end.

Yet once more I do advise all men to take heed how they jest or show their tricks in travel in their chambers with their weapons, no though the scabbard is on; for by such foolish jesting I have known much mischief done, and sometimes murder, when there was no hurt meant at all; therefore I do wish the wiser to rule the other, so that a mischief may be prevented before it is done, for else repentance may come too late. Also in playing with sticks, without buttons, many (for want of skill) may lose an eye, as many have done heretofore. Many a man will say, that skill in weapons is good, and one of the principallest things that belongs to a man, yet themselves altogether unskillful; in their youth they think it too soon to learn, and in age too late, yet when they are wronged, they would give anything, that they were able to answer their enemy without fear or hurt, as he which is skillful in his weapon may do.

Go not into the field with one that is known to be a common drunkard, no though thou take him never so sober, for if thou chance to hurt him, the vulgar sort will deem that he was drunk, so thou do hazard thy life, and get no credit, then take no exceptions at a drunkard's words, for what he speaks

For it happens in an hour which happens not in seven years.

²¹ To cashier (originally cassier) means to dismiss from service.

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is not regarded amongst men of discretion, yet many times it so falls out, that a drunken mad-brain meets with a prodigal unwise fellow, and they do quickly upon a word, nay upon a look, make a sudden brawl, to the disturbance of the rest of the company; for he that will match a crooked dagger with a crooked sheath, in seeking may find one; even so he that is given to swaggering and quarreling, does meet with his match sometimes, nay very often it so falls out.

Also he is unwise which will begin a quarrel in a school of defense, upon the taking of a knock, as many do; for a man plays, either to give a knock, or to take a knock: but with skill a man may play a long time, and do neither of them, except their fury do overcome the wits; but he which cannot arm himself with patience, by considering with himself the danger of his rashness; let him spend all his idle time in practicing in weapons, with one that is skillful; for by use of play, many a man comes to know the danger of rashness, and so with a due consideration, do thereby come to mitigate their furious affection, whereas another sort of hare-brains (upon very small occasion) will be always ready, not only to breed, but also to maintain any idle quarrel, whether it is right or wrong, in fair or market, fence school or tavern, as many witless drunkards do; for skill without discretion makes some more forward and desperate in maintaining idle quarrels, than otherwise they would be, whereas a man of discretion and government will be no whit the prouder of skill, but go as if he had it not, and amongst wise men he is accounted most

[Folio F recto]

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valiant which brags least, and is master of himself, in conquering his affections, and always forecasting the worst, before a mischief does happen; for a common quarreler is like a common hackney, which is never without a galled back; even so a quarreler is seldom without hurts: let thy hands be slower than thy tongue, yet let not thy sword rust for want of use, nor yet surfeit with blood, but after many threats in place convenient unsheathe thy sword, but yet do it with an unwilling kind of willingness, as not being too prodigal of thy blood in mis-spending it idly, and yet grudge it not when occasion shall serve, either for thy king and country, or in defense of thine own reputation, but not in every rascally brawl, nor in a great assembly, where many times a foolish mad-brain, will draw his weapon upon an idle quarrel; in such a place I have known, that after one has drawn, many have likewise drawn their weapons for company, according to the old proverb, one fool makes many: but howsoever, in such a case I have known much mischief quickly done, although many of them have not known the cause, nor whom to strike, until it has been too late; but then when all is done, these great fighters, when it is too late, they would make enquiry how the quarrel began, and upon what occasion; but men of discretion and wisdom would examine the cause first, before they do unsheathe their weapon: for in my mind, he that undertakes such quarrels, shows neither manhood, wit, nor valor, and contrary unto all the laws of arms; yet I will not say, but, where much people are, a man that means no harm, may be wronged; but there

[Folio F verso]

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is no wisdom to right himself in a multitude: for fear of mutiny, I mean in setting many together by the ears, but in a place convenient thou may call him in question which wronged thee before, examining the cause of the quarrel, when the heat is past; and then if you find it but a pelting quarrel, being wisely considered upon, and that it has been no great scandal unto thy good name and credit, partly, because the match was made, and the field was appointed in a drunken humor, in such a case I say, it were a very wise part, for the one of them to make a friend acquainted, which by wisdom may end the quarrel, before a further mischief is done: nay more, I have known as good a man as ever did draw sword, upon an idle quarrel, had himself gone the next morning to the house of his adversary, not making any friend at all acquainted with the business, and he had thus said; I am come to answer what the last night I promised, but yet withal, to tell thee, that our quarrel is but small, and began upon idleness, yea so small, that I am loath to have it come into the ears of wise men, lest they should account us both fools: now, for the avoiding of this and other dangers, it is not amiss for the wiser to offer this reasonable composition, though we do think him too weak for thee, for then thy credit will be the less in fighting with him, and yet if thou do kill him, the danger is as great towards thee, as if thou did kill the best man in the world: now on the other side, say he is a man noted and known to be as sufficient a man as ever drew sword; then I say, if an honest end can be made, without fighting, that is the best way. For if two men of war meet

[Folio F2 recto]
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at sea, they will not fight willingly one with the other, for they will consider beforehand, that there is little else than blows to be gotten one of the other: wherefore, if you be persuaded to end it with a boll of wine, be not froward but yield unto reason, if no friends know of the quarrel, then (as I said before) the wiser of the two may say unto the other; come let us go and drink ourselves friends, let us take a hair of the same dog, which the last night did bite us, and made us mad, shall now cure us and make us whole; and so let us smother up this pelting quarrel.

But now, if the other be froward, and will not accept of thy reasonable motion, but will needs end it with weapons, then, rather than show thy back to thy spiteful enemy, let him see thy heart blood: I mean, if he can get it, but there is no such danger in fight, except skill and discretion are wanting: wherefore rouse up thy spirit, and what thou undertake, do it without rashness, and yet perform it without fear always; in a good quarrel, if thou are overcome, let thy heart yield last of all; and if thine enemy is not too rash upon thee, it is a sufficient conquest, that when thou might hurt or kill, yet do it not, but still wear patience to the hard back, for by such victory thou work thine own peace; and he that thus does, gets himself credit.

As there are many men, so they are of many minds, for some will be satisfied with words, and some must needs be answered with weapons, and some are never well full nor fasting; therefore I would have every man fitly armed for his defense, what company soever he keeps, let him be armed with patience, still a

If the
peacemakers are
said to be blessed,
then the quarrelers
and makebates are
accursed.

[Folio F2 verso]
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fair tongue, and a good weapon: so that if one will not serve, another must, rough or smooth, as occasion serves: for some are like unto nettles, which if thou handle tenderly, it will sting thee, but if thou grip it hard, thou shall have no harm: even so, if thou give unto some men never so mild and gentle words, yet will they not be persuaded, but they will the rather deem that thou fear them, and so domineer the more upon thee: but yet for all that, they are the children of God which desire peace, for the prophet *David* said, *I seek peace, but when I speak thereof, they are bent to war, Psal. 120.7.* Again, there are many reasons to persuade one Christian not to fight with another. First, the king and council, have, and still do make straight laws, for the keeping of peace and for preventing of murders; but above all, God expressly commands to the contrary, and if thou will not obey man, yet fear the displeasure of Almighty God above all.

Consider then and meditate thus with thy self before thou pass thy word to meet any man in the field; why should I go into the field, for when thou come there thou must not kill, for if thou do, thou must look to answer it before that great and fearful judge which is the Judge of all judges: howsoever thou by friendship or by pity do escape the hands of the judge in this life: besides, thou do lose thy goods, which thy wife and thy children should possess. Again, when thou come into the field, and there calling to mind these dangers before spoken of, and so forbearing as being loath to kill: then thy enemy, by sparing him, may kill thee, and so thou perish in thy sins, having small or no

We must not seek
revenge one of an
other, because the
Lord says
Revenge is Mine.

[Folio F3 recto]
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time of repentance, and so thy death will be doubtful, except thou did lead a very upright life before, which may very well be doubted: for if thou did serve God aright, or fear His judgments, then thou would not for any cause fight with thy brother.

Concerning this there is an excellent example of patience shown by King *David*, in the second of *Samuel* 16.6.10. *David* being in the midst of his army, there came a fellow with cursing and railing speeches, saying unto him, *Come out thou murderer*, and withal, threw stones and dust at him: and one of the servants of *David* said unto his master, *Shall I go and take off the head of this railer?* But *David* very wisely and mildly answered his servant thus, *It may be that the Lord has sent him, and therefore let him alone*: but now we have a saying, that flesh and blood cannot endure such injuries as here you see *David* did. But I say, those that will go to Heaven, must not look to be carried thither in a feather-bed, but by enduring injuries, crossings, vexations, and tribulations: oh then think on Heaven, and yet forget not Hell; presume not, nor yet despair not; live to die, and yet die to live: oh then lead thy life in true humility, for so shall thou undoubtedly escape Hell's damnation, and enjoy Heaven's everlasting salvation, which place the God of gods vouchsafe us all.

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Chapter II

Declaring the difference of sundry men's teaching, with a direction for the entrance into the practice with thy weapons.

As men of all arts trades and sciences, differ in art and workmanship, (as for example) all physicians do not use one kind of purgation, nor all surgeons one manner of salve, nor all writers write not alike, but to make a rehearsal of all arts it were too long, my meaning is so many men so many minds, even so in this art of defense as the number which are experienced in it is infinite, even so several fashions do exceed the number of infinite, if it were possible; for every man holds his opinion to be best in that fashion which he has been most used unto; although a man shows them many errors by good judgment, yet it is as hard to withdraw them from their own will as it is to compel a papist from his religion, which he has been always trained up unto.

But the true skill of weapons once perfectly learned is never forgotten again, for if any man were to fight for his life, as by a familiar example I will tell you of those which have been unskillful, yet have had a sudden occasion to use their weapons, and even then suddenly summoning up their wits, what defense they should use for the safeguard of their lives, being so suddenly charged, does not he then as I said remember himself of the best defense, or the best trick, that ever was shown him, for then is the time to stand him in

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stead, and then will use it, although he never played nor never practiced in seven years before.

Nay further, he which never learned one trick but what nature bestowed, nor never had any other experience use nor practice at one weapon nor other, but only what he has seen of others, by chance, where he has happened to come: yet such a one upon a present occasion being urged thereunto, will instantly call to mind that such a time and such a time, I did see such a man fight or play, and he was accounted a very good player, or a very tall man of his hands, and thus he lay or thus he defended himself; lo thus imitating for their defense that which they have seen others do before, another example which by experience I can speak of, and that is of some which never did nor never could swim in all their lives, yet such at sometimes have been in danger of drowning, by chance falling overboard into the sea, or into other deep rivers, where there was no hope of life but only by swimming, such I say being put to their shifts, have remembered themselves in the water, and so by laboring themselves I mean with their hands and their feet, so have escaped and saved their lives. Now I say if every man beforehand were grounded in skill with his weapons, and in the art of swimming when they were young, then would either of them be the less fearful, for what is bred in the bone, will never out of the flesh.

Yet here one example more; take a young plant, and set him, and come again within a month, and you may pull him up with ease, but let him grow a year or two and he will be so deep rooted in the ground, so that you cannot pull him up for your heart, except you use other means: even so of youth, if they give their

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minds to good and laudable exercises when they are young, it were great pity that they should want encouragement, whereby it might take root; but if their minds are given to any idle or bad exercises, it were good then that it were pulled up in time, before it has taken any deep root. And so I will here leave off, because I shall have occasion hereafter to speak concerning those matters.

Chapter III

Fearful examples of murder, with advise to avoid murder.

Generally three sorts of men are hated for the most part, and very much abhorred; that is to say, the proud minded man, a coward, and a murderer, but especially a murderer, howsoever it is done: therefore most unhappy is he which kills a man cowardly, in a desperate humor, but if he does it in his own defense, or in a morning upon a just quarrel in the field, and both being equally matched, then it may be the better tolerated both before God and man, yet I do not well to say so; for *Romans* the 9. it is said, *what are thou which does dispute with God*, then why go I about to make my toleration in murder, when God has given us an express commandment to the contrary, saying; *thou shall not kill. Exodus* 20. According to this saying, he which strikes with the sword, shall perish with the sword; and likewise *S. Paul* gives us a good lesson saying; *do nothing without foresight and judgment*. Because I touch divinity in many places of my book, no doubt some will say what should fencers meddle with divinity; but to answer

In no case commit
not murder.

[Folio G recto]
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you again, every Christian ought to know the Word, (indeed the sword is good) but much the better when they go both together. But to our matter again: those which fear God, and by chance happen into the company of a murderer, their hair will stare, and their blood will rise, that they will inwardly wish they were out of his company again, for many simple men do fear a murderer ever after they have once known him to commit a murder, yet diverse honest men do by chance happen into a murderer's company, when they would be glad to shift themselves from him again; or as it were to spew him out of their presence, in regard of his evil qualities, which is quarreling, and taking exceptions upon any little occasion. If any man also does seem to contrary a murderer, or a little cross him in his swaggering, he will forthwith break out into these or such like ungodly speeches, saying; I have killed a far better man than thy self; such like words will he say with a brazen face and a stony heart, lifted up with the pride of his manhood: for he that is a murderer does think that he is the best man in the world, especially if he escapes the gallows so long, until he has killed two or three men: I have been myself in company with many of them, but I did never see any fruit of repentance in them; for when they have passed the hands of the pitiful judge, then they think that they are cleared forever, as well in this world as in the world to come; and then will they say if they did offend, they had the law for it; but I know not how so many of them escape the gallows: there is a proverb says, *foolish pity overthrow town and city*. I think and am verily persuaded, that a murderer is accursed and hated both of God and man, yea I

Oh remember how
the curse of God
fell upon *Cain* for
murder.

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am also persuaded that the house is accursed wherein they dwell, and the ship wherein they sail at sea, mark their end, and you shall see that although they pass the hands of men, yet God pursues them with the hue and cry of His vengeance, which follows them, and apprehends them, and brings some of them to one kind of death, and some to another; as these few examples following shall declare, and thou may consider of them to thy benefit.

First Sir *John Fitz*:²² how wickedly and how cowardly did he with two or three of his men pursue and overtake Master *Stannell*, as he was riding from *Testok*²³ in *Devonshire*, towards his own house, this Master *Stannell* was beloved both of rich and poor, he was a good and bountiful housekeeper, and his untimely death was lamented of thousands, the occasion of the quarrel, was as I have heard because Master *Stannell* called Sir *John Fitz* tenant, for that Sir *John Fitz* his father had used to pay him a matter of two shillings a year: this was no great cause of quarrel if it had been weighed in the balance of discretion, considering the great love and familiarity which had continued long time betwixt them, the which also was the reason that Master *Stannell* had not of long time demanded the rent, nor did make any reckoning or account of it. But then both having appointed to meet at a merry making in *Testok* only to be merry, and there this unfortunate word tenant proceeded out of Master *Stannell's* mouth, which Sir *John* took in very great choler, Master *Stannell* perceiving that he had moved him betook himself presently to his horse, and riding homewards having but only his footman with him, before he had ridden two miles, Sir *John Fitz* with

²² This story is also told in *The Bloudie Booke; or, the Tragical End of Sir John Fitz*. London, 1605, which was later related in the book, *Devonshire Characters and Strange Events*, by S. Baring-Gould, M.A. (London, 1908), available here: http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Devonshire_Characters_and_Strange_Events/Sir_John_Fitz (accessed 5/16/2014). Though instead of Master *Stannell*, the *Bloudie Booke* names a Nicholas Slanning of Bickleigh as the victim. Despite Swetnam's propensity for borrowing from other sources, he likely did not do so in this case, since several details differ.

²³ Probably Tavistock, Devon.

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two or three of his men, being well horsed overtook Master *Stannell* and there compassing him about some before him and some behind him, most cowardly and desperately murdered him; and upon that Sir *John* fled into *France*, but before one year was past his friends procured a pardon for him, insomuch that he came home again, and to every man's seeming was at quiet, but the hue and cry of God's vengeance was in his conscience, and three or four years after upon *London* way there apprehended him, as you shall hear; for then and there most cruelly and devilishly he killed his host, which was a very honest man, and afterwards most desperately with his own hands took his rapier and murdered himself; yet thus much I can say of Sir *John Fitz* he was a proper man, and for the space of thirty years he lived orderly, to the gesse²⁴ of the world, for he was well beloved in his country, and if he had so continued to the end, it had been well, but what should I say, a man may be an honest man thirty years, yea forty years, and yet be a knave at the last.

Another example was that of one *Hocket* of *Plymouth*, who looking out at a window, and espying one Captain *Robinson* coming down the street, and he having an old quarrel to the said *Robinson* which began at sea, this *Hocket* stepped to his door with his rapier ready drawn, and standing within his own house until Captain *Robinson* was come just against his door, he there without speaking one word ran him through with his rapier, and afterwards was cleared by the judge of this world, but after his coming out of the jail, he went to sea, master in a man of war, and within ten days after he was gone from *Plymouth* to sea, the

²⁴ This is an archaic spelling for "guess", and in this sense would mean estimation or reputation.

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first ship they met withal shot but one shot, and yet killed this *Hocket*, and no man in the ship killed nor hurt but only this murderer.

Likewise in *Plymouth* one Captain *Treherne* and Captain *Eagles* fell out about nothing in a manner, the cause was for that one of them was denied lodging, where the other did lie by the good wife of the house, for it may be she affected the one better than the other, and two dogs and one bone commonly can never agree well together, but they fell out about such a trifling matter, and at the door in the street they fought, and in the first bout, *Treherne* was down in the gutter, and *Eagles* there in presence of many might have killed him, but stayed his hand, and suffered him to rise again, but then *Treherne* assaulted Captain *Eagles* most furiously, and it so chanced that with a blow *Eagles*' rapier broke, and then running into a house to save himself, *Treherne* ran him into the back and killed him, and afterwards he received his trial for it, but by the mercy of the judge he was discharged of that matter. After his coming out of the jail, he presently got a crew of twenty-eight persons, and a ship, and went a-roving upon the coast of *France*, where they were all taken, and every man of them hanged in *France*, now I do verily persuade myself that many of them might have been living at this day, if they had not happened into this murderer's company.

Also, one *Bartlet*, who appointed the field with another, after one bout, his enemy requested him to hold his hands, that he might breathe, which he consented unto; but as they both stood still, this *Bartlet* suddenly charged his weapon upon the other,

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and ran him through, that he died presently, and then *Bartlet* fled and escaped away for the space of seven years, but the hue and cry of God's vengeance followed him, insomuch, that he came again to Plymouth of his own accord, thinking that all was well, and forgotten; but there he was apprehended, and after the law had had his course upon him, God's vengeance left him not, but brought him to Plymouth again, and shortly after, another did challenge this *Bartlet*, they both met in the field, and there was *Bartlet* killed, not far from the place where he had killed the other before, and he that killed him, fled away, and is not taken as yet.

Now, to end these examples with the lamentablest history that ever pen did write, for a more cruel murder was never committed, of King *Richard* the third, in the Chronicles, there may you read it more at large, that after he had committed his brother's two children to the Tower, he was not contented, but would have the lives of these poor infants, the doers of this hellish and cruel murder, were Sir *James Tirrell*, *Miles Forrest*, and *John Dighton*, these three laying their heads together, what manner of execution were best to be used in that tragedy, they concluded in the end, to stifle them in their beds in the dead time of the night, and so with the cloths and pillows which were about them, these three murderers pressing them down under the cloths (as aforesaid) bereaved them quickly of their lives; now, after this, what a hellish horror had this king in his conscience, yea it so vexed and tormented his spirits, that he was never well nor at quiet sleeping nor waking; for in the night he would suddenly start out

Remember this example.

If this makes not your ears tingle, yet it may make your hearts tremble.

Fearful visions do haunt a murderer.

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of his bed, and go up and down the chamber like a mad man; likewise in the day he never thought himself sure, but always feared treasons, his eyes rolling continually about him, and oftentimes he would clap his hand upon his dagger, when there was no need, and afterwards he was vanquished with his enemies; and on the other three God showed His vengeance somewhat in this world. For Sir *James Tirrell* was beheaded afterwards at the Tower for treason, but not for that matter; and *Miles Forrest* had a consuming and a lingering life, for his flesh did rot away by piecemeal, and so miserably died; *John Dighton* lived in great hatred, and was abhorred and pointed at of all that knew him, and at the last died in great poverty and misery. But I refer you unto the Chronicle, as aforesaid, which declares it more at large: and so I will go on a little further to the same effect.

Though the law does spare and not cut off a murderer so soon as he has deserved death; yet I say the horror of his murdering conscience will so be gnawing at his bloody heart, until it has eaten and consumed him to nothing; also the horrible pains of Hell will by visions show, and so plainly appear unto him, still sounding in his ears such a peal, that he many times will think that the devil is come from Hell; for so long as he lives, his spirits will be so distempered and affrighted, that in the night, many times several visions will appear, sometimes spirits with ugly shapes, and sometimes a multitude of weaponed officers rustling in to apprehend him, and sometimes the ghost of him which was murdered, insomuch that many times he will sweat for

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fear, with running, laboring, and striving to keep himself out of their grip, and in a word, afraid he will be (in a manner) of every grass; and whereas before he was accounted for a merry companion, is now overcome with wild looks and melancholy thoughts, taking no joy, in wealth, wife, and children. Lo, this is a life, but it is as wearisome as Hell until death does catch him, for death waits upon a murderer as a halter does upon the stealer; as for example of Sir *John Gilbert* ever after the killing of Sir *John Burrowes*, of which the world says it was an honorable quarrel, and yet in the night his friends reported, that he would suddenly start out of his bed, being sore affrighted, he knew not at what, he lived not many years after, but yet died in his bed; so likewise Master *Hely* killed Captain *Foscue* upon a sudden quarrel, meeting in the street in Plymouth, yet, by the course of the law, was acquitted for it; but afterwards, so long as he lived, he lived a discontented life, and was never well in his conscience until death took him. Now all these were but young men, and in the midst of their years, to the eye of the world, either of them might have lived many years longer, and yet not have been accounted for old men.

I could spend much paper and time with a number of examples touching this matter, but I will here conclude, and leave the rest to thy daily experience, which thine ears may hear, and thine eyes daily see (almost in every place) far more fearful examples, concerning this former matter, the more is the pity; but what becomes of them after this life is ended may seem doubtful, but I leave that to the secret

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wisdom and power of Almighty God; but there is no question to be made of those which lead a wicked and ungodly life, but they shall have a wicked and an ungodly end; as on the contrary side, those that lead a godly and an upright life, shall make a good and godly end: for if a man does well, he shall have well, but if he does ill, he shall have ill. More concerning this matter you may read towards the end of the eighth chapter following.

But I think it not amiss, here in this place, to show you a little concerning murders done in secret; for as the proverb goes, murder will not be hidden; albeit for a time God does suffer a murderer to live and reign without apprehension, yet in the end he makes the devil bring forth his servant, to receive his wages with shame enough, a murder can not be kept still close: for the Lord sometimes does bring a murder to light that has been done in secret, by the birds of the air, by water, by fire, by dogs, as in brief by these examples shall plainly be demonstrated.

It has been known that a murdered carcass has been thrown into the sea when it was flowed to the full, thereby thinking, that with the ebb he would have been carried away, but the water being gone, the murdered carcass was found where it was first thrown in.

Also, I knew a woman that was arraigned and condemned, for murdering her child, and well she deserved the same; for she cut the child into small pieces, and then she took and threw them under a hot furnace where she was a-brewing: but when she had done brewing, and the fire out, there was found

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the pieces of the child in the ashes, so fresh (in a manner) as it was thrown in.

Likewise, in Worcestershire were two brothers, the one a very honest man, and by his honest means and good industry, had gotten to himself a pretty house, and crowns in his purse. But his brother being a careless unthrift, and envying at his brother's prosperous estate, yet kept he it to himself, until finding opportunity, one night (but they two being in the house together;) this graceless unthrift forthwith knocked his brother on the head, which when he had done, he cut off his legs, and buried him under the hearth in the chimney, and laid the stones again very artificially, hoping then that all the goods were his own; and when the neighbors enquired of him for his brother, he told them that he was gone a journey far off, to visit some of his friends. But (a short tale to make) this murderer made a feast, and invited his neighbors and his friends; and when they were all assembled together within the house, as they sat by the fire side, they perceived the stones in the chimney to rise, and the fire tumbled down out of the chimney, for the heat of the fire made the dead carcass swell: and then search being made, the carcass was found, and the murderer taken and executed. God I beseech Him bless every good man from murder, and from being murdered.

I have known many times, that some (through ignorance) have committed murder, in parting of a fray, I mean such as are not experimented in the law, nor have no reason in such a case; for many times they which should keep the peace, commit

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murder ignorantly, I mean, in coming in, either with club or halberd, or such like weapon, and coming behind one of the two that are in fight, strikes him on the head, when he little expects any hurt of any other, but from him which he is now in hand withal, when indeed in such a case, they ought to strike down the weapons of those which are fighting or breaking them, but not strike them. Whose minds are occupied with fury one against the other, and little expecting a mischief to come from one which they never offended. Again some in parting of a fray will run in betwixt them, and hold his familiar friend, and leave the other at liberty, and by this means he which has been at liberty has killed him which is so holden, when many times it had not so fallen out, if they had been both let alone to shift for themselves, therefore men ought to have experience and to use discretion in the parting of a fray, for fools do never forecast of a mischief beforehand, but wise men prevent it before it falls.

Wherefore I would wish whatsoever thou be, which reads this lesson, to remember it, and regard the life of a man, although many are at sometimes very unruly, yet let no abuse cause thee to commit murder, neither in thy own quarrel, nor in parting of any other: for I have heard and known many times that a small stroke has been given with no intention of murder, yet it has fallen out to the contrary, yea and contrary unto all men's expectation, which have seen that a man with his fist or with a riding rod, or with a penny loaf, and other things of less danger, and yet some have died being stricken therewithal.

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Chapter III

Which shows unto whom skill belongs, with the fruits of drunkenness.

Many will say that skill in weapons is a good thing, and fit to be learned of every man, yet all men will say it is pity that a man without government should know the secret skill in weapons, for indeed skill does most chiefly of all belong to a man that has wit and discretion to govern it, that when he has skill knows how to use it as it ought to be used, for a good thing learned and abused were better refused and never learned: for some when they have a little more skill than every common man, then will they think by braving every man which comes in their company, by swaggering it with proud brags and high looks, yet I have known such swaggering companions which have had more hair than wit, meet with their match and carry away the blows with disgrace, and yet themselves beginners of the quarrel when they might have lived quiet if they would.

Therefore he which wears the greatest whistle is not the best mariner, nor he the best man that makes the greatest brags, for some will brave a better man than themselves, and swagger it out, and yet so little in themselves that they will scarce hold the touching when they come to the stone to be tried, yet every subject ought if occasion serves to fight for his king and country, if it is for the Gospel's sake, and sometimes in defense of their own reputation and credit.

He which can govern himself is wise, but that must proceed from God.

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Now although this art of defense is so fit and necessary a thing for all men to be learned, yet withal I do exhort and earnestly entreat all such as have skill to use it in that fashion as it ought to be used, for if a man had twenty good qualities and yet if he is a drunkard, that one ill quality overthrows all the rest, like as when a cow gives a good sop of milk, and then afterwards strikes it down with her foot: she is as much to be blamed for the loss, as commended for the gift, even so a man without government grows out of favor both with God and man, for many a man without discretion and judgment many times does fall out with his familiar friend, and so dare one another into the field, presently upon the sudden falling out. Now if wit is in neither of them, then a thousand to one but murder is committed, for a man with skill may better fight with a hundred in the morning one after another, than with three in an afternoon, upon drink or hot blood; for if you forbear to kill thou may be killed thy self, if thou take thy opportunity thou may easily kill a drunkard in his own coming in, for he will come in without fear or wit: for drink makes a very coward challenge the best man living, for in drink I have known many pass their words to meet in the field upon small occasion, if with discretion the quarrel were rightly considered upon; but their own selves in the morning when they have their right wits about them, then do they many times repent, and wish the match were to make, and that their words were unspoken which they spoke the night before. Yet nevertheless when a man has passed his word howsoever things fall out, he must and will answer

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the challenge, yea though he loses his life by it. Lo these are the fruits of drunkenness, all other vices may be left, but no bridle will rule a drunkard, nor no counsel will make him forgo his drunken and swinish life, drunkenness is the mother of all vices, for drunkenness does beget and breed all manner of deadly sins, for by inordinate drinking thy soul is endangered, thy body is infected, thy understanding banished, thy manhood distasted, thy substance wasted, and beastliness resembled, and thy business neglected, therefore leave that one vice, and all others will fly away with it: for as I said before it is the only breeder and maintainer of quarrelling and fighting, by fighting God is displeased, and the king's laws broken; again if murder is committed, thou lose thy goods, and endanger thy life; if thou lose it not, yet thou shall live despised, and hated of all honest minds that know thee, so that thy life will be more loathsome than death, therefore not to fight at all is best, except thou are charged upon contrary to thy expectation, then defend thy self, and yet fear as much to kill as to be killed.

Chapter V

The cause of quarrels, and what preparation you ought to be prepared with to answer a challenge.

Dissention, quarrels, and murder grow many times upon small occasions, yea so small, that when it comes to the ears and to be disputed upon amongst the wise, when they have scanned it over yields up their verdict, saying such and such are fallen

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out for the value of a rush, and such and such have killed one another for just nothing, is not here more madness? Yet I will not say but at one time or another a man's reputation may be so nearly touched, that it cannot stand with his credit to pocket it up, although it is made upon drink, for indeed the pot is the chief cause almost of all quarrels, yet being wronged, it cannot stand with a man's credit, to keep his weapon in his sheath; neither do I counsel all men to pocket up all injuries which some will proffer them, but to answer a good quarrel, not only with words but with deeds, as follows, for the further instruction. Whoso is honorably challenged unto single combat, the challenged may make the choice of his weapon, and likewise of the time when, and of the place where.

Likewise, the challenged may choose to fight on foot or on horseback, which for his best advantage he shall think fittest: now also the challenged is to consider well the quality of the challenger, that thereby he may make the better provision of such furniture as may serve for his own defense, and likewise to terrify and hurt the challenger.

Now, if the challenger is choleric and hasty, then charge thy point directly upon him, that if he presses upon thee, he may come upon his own death: but before thou go into the field, discharge thy duty and conscience towards God, as well as in weapons, for thy best advantage, otherwise it cannot choose but be to thy body dangerous, and unto thy soul doubtful, and a most principal note is this to be observed, for thou are not sure whether ever thou shall return again or never.

Be well advised before thou do pass thy word, for a man will be as good as his word, if it does cost him his life: for it is a coward's trick to cry *peccavi*,²⁵ or least in sight the next morning.

²⁵ Latin for "I have sinned."

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Remember your skill, when you are at play, or in fight, for I have known many, when their fight and play is ended, they do remember, that with this trick, or with that trick they might have defended themselves, and either hurt or disgraced their enemy, but many (through madness and fury) remember it not till it is too late.

If you are both skillful in the false play, then I hold it good for both to play upon the true play, for it boots but little to use false play to one that knows how to proffer it, and how to defend it; for it is ill halting before a cripple, yet I will not say but the best of all may be deceived by false play, but especially false play may stand thee in great stead, upon those which are not come unto the full perfection of knowledge: Again, one may have skill in one kind of false play, but not in all.

Now whether thy enemy is skillful or not, it is a very easy matter to know so soon as he begins to charge his weapon, if thou had no former knowledge beforehand. If two crafty knaves meet at dice, if either of them shifts in false dice, the other will perceive it presently, and so they will know each other to be gamesters, but they will give over the sooner, with small loss each to other, referring themselves to their better fortunes, and hoping to meet with easier gamesters; even so I wish all men, if they perceive themselves to be hardly matched, the wiser of them to yield upon composition, after reasonable trial made each one of the other, before any great hurt is done; for the best man that ever breathed, has, and may meet with his equal: and when two good men meet, the conquest will be hardly

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and dangerously ended on the one side, except discretion is a mediator to take up the matter, before it comes to the worst, if by friends it is not ended beforehand; but if thou can hurt thy enemy, yes, although it is but a little, or unarm him of his weapon, which thou may very easily do, if thou do fight with good discretion. And either of these are accounted for a victory; also, take this for a general rule always, keep thy body within compass of true defense, considering otherwise, that the danger is great in that part of the body which lies most discovered, and is nearest unto thine enemy.

Now when thy enemy does assault thee, and is lifting up his weapon to discharge at thee, be not then to prepare thy defense, but be ready beforehand to defend every part of thy body, according to my directions, as when you come to it you shall see more plainly. For thou do not know beforehand where the blow will light: As shrinking up of shoulders is no payment of debts, no more will winking or blinking defend thy carcass, as those which have no skill will wink: therefore, again, and again, I say, be prepared with skill beforehand. Most sure it is the blow must have his fall: but at every weapon I have shown how to defend it, therefore the defender must be well experienced beforehand with his defense, at such a weapon as he means usually to carry, that when the blow does light, thou may be in thy defense, not to defend thine enemy's blow only; but also to answer him again in the time of advantage, for a quick answer shows good cunning. Nor to know the true place for the holding of thy weapon, that is not all, but always so long

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as thou are within thy enemy's danger continue them in their place, except it is at the very instant time when thou go about to offend thine enemy, and that must be done with a very good discretion, and thy weapon must be recovered up again into his place nimbly. Now if thy enemy does discover some part of his body, that, to thy seeming, lies very open, yet be not too hasty in offering play, though the bait is never so fair, bite not at it too rashly or unadvisedly, lest like the foolish fish you are taken with the hook which lies covered with the bait; for if your enemy finds your weapon or weapons out of the place of true defense, yea if it is but an inch too high, or too low, too wide, or too narrow, it is as much as concerns thy life: if thou are matched with one that is skillful, never overlay thy self with a heavy weapon, for nimbleness of body, and nimbleness of weapon are two chief helps for thy advantage in play.²⁶ Again, and again I say, strike not one blow in fight, at what weapon soever thou fight withal, except it is a wrist blow, and that you may as well do with a rapier, as with a sword, for a wrist blow consumes but a little time, yet better use no blow at all, but continually, thrust after thrust: for (in my mind) he is a man ignorant and very unskillful that will be hurt with a blow, and if thou make an assault upon thy enemy do not tarry by it, to maintain it, for in making the assault distance is broken, wherefore recover back into your guard and distance again so soon as you can, and always let your eyes be on your enemy's face, and not altogether on the point, then you may be deceived, by the swift motion of the hand, for the motion of the hand is swifter

²⁶ While this thought is similar to one expressed by Di Grassi, it was not necessarily cribbed from his book, as were passages from Silver, Saviolo, and Hale.

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than the eye or foot, many will set their eyes upon their enemy's point, or upon his hand for the avoiding of this error, the best remedy is daily exercise and practice one with another, and to play with more than one, otherwise thou will never come unto true defense for it is good to be acquainted with every man's fashion, for that trick which will hit one will not hit another, and therefore be well experienced not only in the true play but in the false; I mean for the defense and offense of both, that if thou cannot prevail with the one then use the other: yet take heed of hasty adventuring in, lest thou with the foolish bird which flies into the lime bush, and being in, the more she strives, the faster she is; then make no more haste than good speed, lest thou are taken in thy own folly, for many times haste makes waste: if thou shoot at a mark if the mark is never so fair, yet if thou shoot hastily without discretion, thou may oftener miss than hit; also I do advise thee not to determine to answer every thrust or blow home which thy enemy does assault thee with; but to answer it something short until thou perceive whether he has any false play or not, otherwise if thou make thy answer home, he may deceive thee by false play: now if both are experienced in the true play and false then you might continue in fight a whole day, if it were possible to endure so long and have no hurt: if thou have a close-hilted dagger and a rapier, I hold them more surer than a sword and dagger, but with the skillful there is no danger in either of them; again in fight a man needs not use half the skill which he may learn, the second point of hawking is to hold fast, and the second and chiefest point in this exercise is to learn to defend thy self, and to

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use it when thou have occasion, then remember where about thou are.

And let no illusions cause thee to look about thee when thou are within thy enemy's distance, lest he take the advantage when thou do not see him, or before thou are aware, as many do: for after when thou have the wound, it is but a folly for thee to say, I had thought he would not have struck me so cowardly: I remember a tale as I heard out of *Germany*, thus it was, the master and usher of a school had upon occasion appointed the field, and their weapon was each of them a two handed sword, and meeting at the place appointed, said the master thou are not so good as thy word, the usher asked him why; marry said he thou promised to bring nobody with thee, and yet look yonder what a number of people are coming towards thee, the usher no sooner looked about, but the master smote off his head, and afterwards meeting with some of his friends said, I have taught my man a new trick this morning said he, which he never learned before. Lo thus he killed him by policy, but it was no manly trick, neither do I commend this manner of murder: in my mind the master had been better that he had denied to go into the field with his man, than to have such a clog of murder upon his conscience by killing of him, by what means or policy soever; for every one ought to remember that he must not take vengeance, when and where he may, so oft as an injury is proffered him, concerning this there is a good example to be imitated by strong beasts which never turn again when little curs run barking after them, for the mighty or skillful ought to use their power moderately, for so they may the better use

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it continually, for although fighting is the trial of cunning and skill in weapons, and many men thereby prove their force, and yet afterwards become great friends, for fighting is nothing dangerous being both wary and skillful: but now in my mind much deceived are those which think that a quarrel begun with words cannot be ended but with weapons, but my opinion is that so long as no blows pass but only words, yet words are the cause of many quarrels, for words will sting worse than a nettle, and prick deeper than a thorn, and cut more keener than a sword, yet for all that let wisdom and reason guide thy hand and after you have crossed one another with two or three cross words, then fall into a civil kind of reasoning the matter, and not in fury suffering it to grow into any further quarrel, for a little spark at the first is easily quenched, even so upon the drinking of a cup of wine or a pipe of tobacco, or upon such a light matter of no importance many a quarrel is begun; now in such a case I would wish the wiser of the two in his good discretion, to yield first, and so to end it without further grudging, for reasonable speeches may be a full satisfaction where a small offense is committed.

But now if one of the parties in a stubborn frowardness will not yield but rather go into the field with a desire to kill the other, now if there is never a one of them wise, murder is committed and at leisure repented: but he which first begins the quarrel, or gives the first box on the ear, rashly or unadvisedly, upon a small matter as aforesaid, is worthy and well deserves to be answered again with three, or else with the bastinado. And to match with this I will tell

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you a tale of a friar, who in his sermon said if one gives thee a blow on the one ear, turn the other and take another, and a lusty serving man hearing him, after the sermon was ended, he came unto the friar and said, sir you made a good sermon, but yet in my mind there was small reason in one lesson that you gave us, what was that said the friar, marry quoted the serving man that if one gives me a blow on the ear, I should turn the other, and take another: why said the friar the Scripture commands us so to do, but quoted the serving man will you follow the Scripture herein, yes marry that I will said the friar, with that the serving man up with his fist and gave him a good box on the ear; the friar turned the other, and took another, but now says the Scripture (quoted the friar) look what you would have others do to you, do the like to them; look what measure you mete, the like measure shall be measured to you again, with heap and thrust, and running over, and with that the friar took a good crab-tree cudgel and beat the serving man well favoredly, and so to our former matter again. Does every blow that is given deserve the answering in the field, I say not but first requite the blow again, as before said, for I have valued the rate of the first beginner so low as may be, for he is worthy to be requited, not in the same manner, but in a more open fashion, requite the box again, and then being equaled of the first wrong; let him which began the game reckon of his pennyworths, and if in casting up his reckoning he finds himself a loser, let him sit down by his loss, and learn to make a wiser bargain another time; but if it cannot be so ended, then it must be answered otherwise as occasion shall serve.

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Now if the lie is given before you grow into choler with a rash foolish fellow; first, consider in what case the party is, which gives the lie, before thou strike; for in drink or in fury I have seen one give the lie, which would not have done it at another time, I mean when he had his right wits about him. Well, but say a man, at such time, and in such a case, do give the lie, some mad heads will say, that it deserves the stab presently; but I never knew any man stab or kill another, upon what occasion soever, but he was sorry for it afterwards: That mariner is not to be commended which gets his cunning by many shipwrecks; nor that man is not to be praised for his government which gets it by his punishment, which he has for the killing of two or three men.

Now, upon the receiving the lie, if the stab is not given, some giddy headed kill-calves will say, that such a man took the lie, and did not answer it with a stab, wherefore he is a coward; but now I say, and this is my opinion, he shows the best wit, and most valor, which seeing a man out of the way, (as we term it) will give a mild and a quiet answer unto a froward question: also the wiser sort will commend the patience of him that can bear with one that is past reason; for all men know, that he which commits murder, will afterwards wish with bitter tears, that he had conquered his affections, and stayed his hands, I mean, if there is any spark of grace at all in him; and the first which strikes, many times loses his life, therefore though thou cannot rule thy tongue, yet have a care to rule thy hands before a mischief is done, for he which commits

Therefore do not
that today which
may be repented
of tomorrow.

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murder, when he comes to examination, it is but a simple excuse to say, the other gave me the lie, and called me knave, and I could not brook it. There is a pretty example, and worth the noting concerning such a matter (as I have heard it) and thus it was. A judge sitting in judgment against a murderer, who answered for himself saying, and it please you my Lord, he gave me the lie, and called me knave. Why said the judge, will thou kill a man for that? Call me knave, and give me the lie: the judge being importunate, in the end, the murderer said, you are a knave, and you do lie; then the judge took the skirt of his coat and shook it, and said, Lord, now what am I the worse? But every man cannot be so patient: although some will keep company seven years, and yet never give any cause of quarrel: yet some again will upon a little drink, or upon a small occasion quarrel, swagger and fight, almost in every company they come into; there is a proverb goes, he which has an ill name, is half hanged: before he comes to the bane, another proverb touching our former matter says, he which is accounted for an early riser, may lie abed till eleven of the clock: even so he which has tried his manhood, afterwards the world will judge and say, that he is a man of his hands, and that he dares fight upon a good occasion; but if he makes a common occupation of fighting, he will then be accounted for a common quarreler, and his friends will refuse his company many times for doubt of his quarreling, and yet he shall never be accounted, more than a man again. He which is quarrelsome shall oftentimes meet with his match; but if a tried fellow does

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at sometimes forbear when he is wronged or challenged, the wiser sort will never account the worse manhood in him; therefore except it is upon a most open and great abuse, let patience be thy buckler, and a fair tongue thy sword, and always have a care in the beginning what will be the end; for a mischief sometimes happens in an hour which happens not in seven years again, but oh thrice happy were that man, which towards the latter end of his days, can without a pair of lying lips say, I thank my God, I never bore malice, nor I never injuriously wronged any man, in thought, word, or deed in all my life.

Chapter VI

Diverse reasons or introductions to bring thee the better unto the knowledge of thy weapon.

If thou do mean to practice after my direction, then put thy weapons in their right place, looking not only to the picture, but to the words going before and after, likewise, frame your head, body, foot, and hand, according to my direction (as it follows) after the first picture; for if either your weapons, or any part of your body are out of their place: yea, though it is but an inch too high, an inch too low, too wide, or too narrow, it is as much as your life is worth; If your enemy is very skillful and willing withal; therefore, when thou go to practice, read it advisedly, with understanding, for I could

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have made a great volume, in describing many sorts of guards at every weapon, but it would have been an intricate piece of work, and needless for every common man to know.

For as some scriveners can write twenty kinds of hands, yet one or two will serve the turn; but the more sorts being well written, are the more to be commended, but to have an entrance into many, and not to do one well, is not worth commendations: even so one guard perfectly learned at every weapon, may serve thee for thy true defense whilst thou live, against all other guards.

It is but little available to thee, if thou see a good scrivener write, except thou take the pen and practice to write, as he does; even so, it boots thee but little, that would be skillful of thy weapon, if thou do see two skillful men play except thou take weapons and practice to do as they have done before thee.

Again, it is not enough for him that would write well, to write his copy but once over, and so leave, no more must thou, if thou will have skill in thy weapons, thou must not give over with playing of one bout, but thou must exercise it many times, and practice it often.

And if a man writes well, and exercises it never so much, yet he can never exceed, well written; even so in skill of weapons a man may be perfect, and play well; but when thou have learned the true and perfect skill with thy weapons, thou may exercise for thine health and recreation, but thou shall never pass that word, well played.

Also, he which writes much, and does not regard

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his copy, but writes after his own will, I think it were strange for such a scholar to write well, but he will always write a ragged hand: even so he that gets him hilt and cudgels, and goes about to learn of his own head without direction of one that is skillful, it were better that he had never played, if afterwards he goes to learn; for he must first unlearn that which he has learned, which will be very hard to be done without great pains taking.

Now he which writes a good secretary hand, and then afterwards he goes to learn roman hand, or court hand, or any other the like, he does not thereby lose his secretary; but if he can write all kind of hands, then may he use most, that which he likes best, or thinks fittest: even so, he which has (by his practice) gotten good skill, and yet being of another man's teaching, it is of another manner of teaching, and I will not say but that it may be so good or better than mine: yet he which learns my rules or follows my directions, it can not hinder him any whit at all, but if he has once gotten them by good and perfect practice, if he likes them not, may go to his old fashion again, or learn of any other afterwards.

Yet again, as the observing of a true distance in a scrivener between every line, is commendable in his writing, so it is done without ruling of it, which comes by much practice; even so in true skill in fight, distance is a most excellent thing, and the principallest thing of all, next unto the guard to be observed and kept, and it must be gotten by great practice.

Again, when you learn to write at the first, you

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write leisurely, but with much practice your hand comes to be swifter; even so, with often use of thy weapon, thy hand will come to defend either blow, or thrust more readily or more speedily than at the first beginning of thy practice, albeit thou are shown how to defend; and though thou have the reason perfectly in thy head, and know when an other does it well, yet without practice thou can never be skillful in defense of thy self.

Also, he which writes, and with his pen does sputter his paper with ink, a scholar will think, if it is not a great blot, it is a small matter, but a scrivener will say, it is a great fault; even so, if thy weapon or any part of thy body is out of the right place, yea, though it is but a little, yet it will seem to him that has skill, as much as a great blot does to a scrivener in a copy book.

Moreover, he which learns to write, must continually look to his copy, and must write according to it; for one letter, or one line well written, is better than a great deal of ink and paper spoiled, and not one letter well made: even so, one blow, or one thrust performed orderly, I mean, in his due time, and likewise to the right place, is better than a hundred unorderedly done.

Furthermore, if in writing an obligation, a scrivener does write one letter of roman hand, and another of secretary, another of court hand, it will not be seemly, nor commendable, but with what hand you begin with, to end with the same; even so you may frame yourself, sometimes into one guard, and sometimes into another, taking heed always, that you observe the same defense which belongs

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to the guard; for if you are in one guard, and you use the defense of another, so you may deceive yourself (for every guard differs in defense and offense) and betwixt every blow, and every thrust, and every guard which I have here described in this book: there is as great odds as is betwixt secretary hand, court hand, and roman hand: nay the several differences of guards are more in number than there are several kinds of hands in writing, yea many more than any fiddler can play lessons upon his instrument, and the nature of the guards do differ as much as one lesson from another; wherefore those that think one defense serves for defense of all guards, are as much deceived, as they that think there is but one kind of lesson to be played upon all instruments: for that several kinds of lessons are to be played upon all instruments are infinite; even so, the several guards for defense and offense are not to be numbered; for, between the true skill in weapons, and the false, are a hundred of each at the least, and the contrariest and the most unseemly, every man has by nature, but the best and surest way is to be learned by art of them that are skillful; wherefore see every man's judgment. For as thou may hear at one sermon that which thou shall never hear again, even so thou may learn of one teacher, that thou cannot learn of another: for every one that practices natural play without direction of one that is skillful, such a one in his practice, will have one foolish trick or other: which when they have by common practice long used, will hardly be withdrawn from it: as for example, some will be setting their foot upon their weapons, as if it were to stretch him when he was

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right before, but they do it of a foolish custom that they learn of themselves: likewise, some will puff and blow like a broken-winded horse when they are at play, and some will dance and keep a trampling with their feet, and some will flourish and waver with their weapons, some will whistle, and some will be blabbering of spittle in their mouths, and putting out their tongues, and some again will run about as though they could stand on no ground, and it is as hard to wrest or drive them from such unseemly customs, as it is to drive a dog from a piece of bread.

Yet many do not see it in themselves, but unto the skillful, which behold them, it will seem very unseemly, and by nature, everyone has the worst way; as for example, there are but two ways for the bowing of the head, either to the right hand, or to the left, and by nature, every one does bow him towards the left side, rather than to the right side; and there is very great odds betwixt the right and the wrong in true defense, as I have described in my reasons more at large, both in the place of sword and dagger, and rapier and dagger, for it is great advantage to lean thy head towards the right shoulder a little; and at the beginning of your practice it is very easy to frame yourself to my fashion, with standing both with feet and body, for the use of the foot comes not by nature, but by practice. Again, many young men will be grown with slothfulness, and be so lazy, that they must be haled (as it were) with cart ropes to any good exercise, accounting him their greatest enemy which gives them the best counsel, but to all folly they are prone and apt

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of themselves, but persuade them to any goodness, and you shall see them hang arse-ward like a dog in a string.

Most youth, for example, are willing to go to school at the first, but within a week or less, away must the book be laid, for fear lest much learning make them mad, as *Festus* said to *Paul*,²⁷ for they will wax dull and weary with a little pains taking.

And next, they must to the fence school, but there I am persuaded they need not learn offense, and I think a little defense is enough for them; for many will be weary of well doing quickly, saying as the porters of *Bristol*, a new master, a new, and hang up the old; even so, from the fence school they must go to the dancing school, thinking that to be the only exercise in the world, but with a little practice they wax weary of dancing likewise: then they say, oh that here were one to teach music! That exercise they should never be weary of, but within a little while that will be too tedious a matter to comprehend: so you may perceive young men (by their wills) will take pains at nothing, I mean, not one in twenty, but what they are forced unto.

Now I do not put down those vanities, here before in this chapter expressed, thereby that thou should wax the worse, by the reading of it, but I do wish thee to mark others, and likewise examine thy self, that if thou see in others, or find in thy self such foolishness, refrain while thou are young.

Although many there are that do use foolish tricks, and perceive them not in themselves to be unseemly, but suppose they become them well, as he that wavers his weapon, or runs about, wearies him

²⁷ Acts 26:4.

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self: besides, he that so runs is in danger of falling, for a little shrub, bush, briar, stone, or molehill, may soon overthrow him which does not traverse his ground leisurely and orderly; for he which has true defense must be steady in his guard with his foot and hand in their right place, whereas he which wavers his weapon is at no certain guard for his defense; therefore, to keep steady your weapons in their right place, is the best way: for, one blow, or one thrust, orderly done, is better than a hundred without skill or out of order; for cunning in weapons may be compared to tricks at cards, for if one shows a trick at cards, it will seem strange to him that never saw it before; but to him that can do it, it is nothing troublesome; even so, as that trick at cards is nothing when the secret is known, but very easy to be done: even so, the best way at weapons, is as easy to be followed (being known) as the worst.

Far deceived are those which imagine they cannot attain unto the perfect skill of defense with rapier and dagger, without such antic²⁸ fashions of learning, which many of late years have devised, some wreathing their bodies like unto a cock's, and some, as though they were going to dance the antic, which makes many that have no experience at this weapon think it impossible ever to frame their bodies, as they see these do, which I speak of: but now these fantastical fellows will persuade a man, that it is not possible to play well at rapier and dagger, except a man can frame his body as they do; but I say, the best and surest way is the easiest to be attained unto; for a boy of fifteen years of age, may (by

²⁸ The original spelling of this word is "antique." In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio also uses the word "antique" to deride Italian fencing. While the Oxford English Dictionary defines "antique" as being old, archaic, or out-moded, a definition going back to the 1540s and in line with our modern usage of the word, in both Swetnam's and Mercutio's cases, the word is set against the then "new" methods of Italian rapier fencing. The phrase "dance antique" appears in several works contemporary with Swetnam, often spelled "dance anticke," and several dictionaries of the 16th and 17th centuries define "anticke" as grotesque, bizarre, or incongruous in shape or form, usually in reference to the human form.

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small practice) defend himself against any man, with his rapier and dagger; for a thrust with a rapier is more fearful than with a sword, and a man may see the thrust better of a sword than with a rapier, because there is odds in the breadth and bigness each of the other. Again, a man shall thrust further with a rapier than with a sword, for the hilt of a sword will shorten your reach, by reason of the closeness of the hilt, though they are both of one length.

Yet many are of this opinion, and will say, it is better to fight with a sword and dagger, than with rapier and dagger, the reason is (say they) with my sword I may both strike and thrust.

But I say, and by good experience I speak it, that he which strikes in fight, gives his enemy a great advantage; besides, a sword may either bow or break, and so by that means he that strikes may fall into his enemy's mercy. Besides that, a boy of fifteen years of age may safely defend the strongest man's blow that is, according to my direction following in the first picture; for a weak man, or a boy, may defend more with both his hands, than a strong man can charge him with one; for many cannot forbear striking, being moved thereunto by anger, except they have been grounded in the disadvantage of it by much practice; he that does defend a blow double, and makes a quick answer with a thrust, by turning of his knuckles inward, may hit any man that strikes, and yet defend himself without loss of time.

For the defense of a blow double, is sure, and yet you may answer your enemy so soon, and with as much danger to him as if you did defend it single, for

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it may be all done with one motion, both the defense and offense.

Furthermore, I would counsel all clothiers or chapmen, which carry many times more money than they are worth, for their defense against false knaves, to carry a staff in their journeys, whether it is on horseback or on foot; for a good weapon does not only serve to keep the peace, but also a man's purse from a thief; and likewise to be experienced in the skill thereof, if they should be driven to encounter upon a sudden at the like weapon. But a staff may easily encounter against a sword and dagger, although but small experience is in the staff man; but a little skill is a great help at a time of need, which if thou have not obtained in thy youth, then be not ashamed to learn when thou are old; for as in a school of learning, there are some in grammar, and some in the cross-row;²⁹ so the greatest judge in the land was in the cross-row first: even so into a school of defense there comes, as well bad players, as good, and he which is the good player ought not, nor it is not a thing usual to mock or scoff at him which is the bad player: and what of all this? Nothing, but to show, that it is better to learn late than never, I mean especially any good exercise or quality, which is, or may be profitable for a commonwealth, healthy to the body, and commendable to the world, for we are not born altogether for ourselves, but our parents, friends, and country have interest in our birth.³⁰

Now although some will talk of this and that, and say, that they have fought with four or six men at once, yet I can conceive no reason, how any man

²⁹ The cross row, also known as Christ's cross row or crisscross row, was a hornbook, or ABC primer to teach children their letters, and also often included the Lord's Prayer.

³⁰ This is a common enough idiom, but it is taken from Cicero's *De Officiis*, 1:22.

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should defend two men, especially if they are both willing to spoil, or kill; for when thine eye is directly upon one of them; the other, in the meanwhile, may kill thee, if he is disposed; for the motion of the eye is slower than the motion of the hand; for a man cannot cast his eye about so quick, but that he which is behind thee, or on the one side of thee, may kill thee, if they are both willing (as I have said before:) but indeed if one skillful man has two or three upon him, and is in a narrow place, that they cannot get about him, then may he defend himself a long time without hurt.

A left hand skillful has odds against a right handed man, one reason is, that a left handed man is continually used to a right hand, but a right hand does seldom meet with a left handed man; another reason is, a right handed man, when he does open his right side of his head, by offering play, although he bears his dagger to the right ear, yet it does not defend that side, so sure, nor so strong as it does the left side. But indeed, so long as the right handed man lies in his guard of defense upon his backsword, for the backsword is the chiefest point of defense against a left handed man; therefore when you encounter against a left handed man, you must be careful and heed, if you do offer play, to recover your guard again presently, and be in the defense of your backsword guard: But of this I will speak more at large hereafter.

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Chapter VII

That fear and fury are both enemies to true valor.

I have taken upon me a very hard question to decide: for I cannot well set out the office of the one, but with disgrace of the other; the one is so clean contrary to the other: First, that fear is an enemy unto valor, I need not to make any long discourse, for everyone will say, that the fearful man will never attempt anything worthy the name of valor, but always bear a load of injuries upon his broad shoulders, excusing all the wrongs which are done him, saying, that they were done with no intent of wrong, and so himself first craving pardon of those which offend him, but yet bearing an injury in his mind, until he can revenge it, by virtue of an office, or one way or another; also, he is a raiser of mutinies, and loves to see others together by the ears, and yet keeps himself out of danger, but some I have known, which have been timorous and cowardly, show great valor, but indeed it was when there was no remedy but that they must needs fight. Again, I have known many simple cowardly men, who being well experienced with skill, and being practiced therein, do wax bold and valorous; for when (by often trial) they see that they can save and defend themselves, what need have they to fear, for there is a certainty of defense, and he which has it, may be as sure without making any doubt or question, as it is for arithmeticians to cast up several sums just to a penny; even so certain may a skillful man be in his

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defense: and it is as easy to make a fearful or cowardly man, perfect in knowledge, and so by knowledge to bring him to be valorous; yea more easy it is than to make a hasty man, of valor and stomach, to forbear his former resolution; for as no persuasions will make a drunkard forsake his drunkenness, but only poverty or death: even so there is almost no means to persuade the furious and hasty man from this sudden quarrelling and stabbing, but only many dangerous wounds, imprisonment, or death: Yet if such a one does run through many brawls, and yet so continues, until his own rod has beaten him, by crosses and troubles: if all these cannot make him live civil, and in sober fashion, as he ought to do, yet old age will bring experience, and will make him as tame as a sheep; for when he is old, then he will say, that a man should not adventure further than skill being tempered with discretion, does allow: for observe I pray you, if you chance to see two skillful men play or fight; and if these two fall into choler and fury, so that like two wild bulls they go to it pell mell, then it is chance nobby to hit or miss; for where fury has the upper hand it is not worth the fight to the beholders, for they can show no true art, except they observe distance, for distance being broken, they cut or hurt one another which is a great disgrace unto true art, and a discouragement to many which would learn skill, but that they see by such hasty fools, that skill avails not, and indeed it does little avail such as cannot bridle their hasty affections; but yet many will say it is true, yet they cannot beware of the devil, until they are plagued with his dam. For after a skillful man has

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received hurt he presently condemns his own folly, for receiving that which he might have avoided if his mind had been on his business; now as I would have no man turn coward but to answer a good quarrel, so likewise I would most earnestly wish all men to forbear and not maintain such light and idle brawls which either spring from lewd women, as that are pot frays, for drunkenness is the cause of the most quarrels that be, yet still I do allow and commend any man to answer his enemy upon a good quarrel, and to stand against him, if he does assault thee: for that will make others to fear to do thee wrong or thy friend wrong, thinking that thou will right it. Now he which is valorous by nature, and has no skill, and yet has a good strength, courage, and stomach, many times does adventure rashly without fear or wit, not much unlike a foolish gamester which urges and never counts upon his fellow's game, but many times it were better hold then vie, for as some lose their money by their rash vying at the one, so many lose their lives by a foolish bold hardiness at the other: for many in their very first attempt, or as it were their entering into hope to get the praise of the world to be accounted valorous lose their lives, which is for want of mixing discretion with stomach.

Many examples to this effect might be shown which happened in the wars of *France, Flanders* and *Ireland*, for in all these places as good men for valor as ever the sun did shine upon, lost their lives upon the very first attempt, only by rashness, and so their honor is written in a chronicle of dust, for it even died with them.

I hold it a greater credit to retreat for thine own safety being in danger, rather than still to charge one

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and so be slain or sore wounded, yet mistake me not, for I do not here commend running away neither, but use a mean and policy in retreating, for running away is a coward's defense. A good man may give back for his advantage, and no disgrace at all, if men of judgment do see it, and do judge with discretion. For the valiantest captain that ever did breathe, for his advantage would retreat without any dishonor at all, therefore he which will be accounted valorous, and run through many dangers and briars of mischief, quarrels and troubles of this world, he must many times be patient upon a great wrong proffered him, but afterwards with discretion examine thy force and thy skill together, how thou may without hazard of thy life revenge the wrong offered, and that thou may so fight as thou may fight again, without losing thy life upon the first assault as many do, but he is a fool which will adventure all his goods in one ship, especially if it is in a dangerous voyage, or all his money at one throw at dice although he knows the run of the dice never so well, for he that does so may hap to lose it all. For there are many dangers at sea and many chances at dice, but a good quarrel does half defend himself, and also a good quarrel many times makes a coward fight: again, it is a great discredit to be counted a runaway, the unskillful must do for his own defense at sometimes and yet stomach enough.

Therefore whether it is in single combat or otherwise, use thy weapon with discretion, without choler or hastiness, looking unto thy business which thou have in hand, soberly and mildly, and let wisdom guide the bridle, for so may thou go through many a quarrel

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and run through many skirmishes often without hurt, although not without danger.

There is no exercise learned but by often practice, for so it is made perfect: valor, and stomach come by nature, but skill never comes by nature, and he which is grounded in skill by art and practice will not fear the proud brags of any man. But now if such a one fights he uses his skill and depends chiefly upon it, but the hasty and furious man thinks that he is never near enough, and so many of them never fight but once, for they are slain in their own hastiness, the very first time of adventuring; for haste oftentimes makes waste.

I do remember a pretty jest of King *Henry* the eighth as I have heard it, that when he went to *Boulogne* he sent out his press-masters,³¹ commanding them to bring all the lustiest hackers in the country, and they brought and presented him with many that in fight had received many wounds, the scars whereof remained, and the King beholding them saw that some of them had been cut in the face in one place, and some in another, and some on the head, and some had lost some of their fingers; then said the King unto the press-masters, I like these men well; but yet go fetch me them which did cut those fellows, whereby he meant that those which had the most hurts were not the best men.

³¹ Press masters, or press gangs, were commissioned with conscripting, or impressing, men into military service.

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Chapter VIII

How the use of weapons came, also the number of weapons used from time to time, with other good instructions.

Man was first created naked, without any weapons naturally, saving only hands and feet, which are able to make but a weak resistance against any great violence, only this the hands to thrust away that which may annoy us, and the feet to run from that which may hurt us. Now all other creatures except man are naturally armed with such weapons as do oftentimes kill and destroy any other beast which does offend them.

As for example, God in his creation furnished the lion, the bear, the dog, and the wolf, and other such like beasts, with long and sharp teeth and claws, and they are with them able to tear in pieces and devour any man or beast, which they oppose themselves against, now other beasts there are whose strength consists in other parts, and they do avenge themselves in other manners; as the unicorn and the bull, with their horns, and the force of their heads, so that there is no other beast or creature is able to abide the violence and force thereof.

Also note the force of fowls of the air as the falcon, and the eagle, what a dangerous weapon is the beak of them unto such fowl or beasts as they oppose themselves against.

Likewise for venomous beasts, as the serpent, the viper, the scorpion, and such like, are so armed with poisoned and venomous stings, which not only terrify but hurt and destroy those men or beasts which

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come near them.

Likewise God in his creation made all creatures to several purposes, but most of all for the use of man, for some he made to feed us, some to clothe us, some to sport us, and some to carry us, and some to destroy us.

Lo thus much by the way of argument, as a preamble to that which I intend to speak of concerning weapons as follows.

In old times amongst men the strongest carry away the victory, I mean at that time when there was little or no other weapon used, but only tooth and nail, hands and feet: now in those days many men did think that they made a good hand when they saved themselves by flight, or any other means, from those which were too strong for them, and so the world continued a long time, the strongest still carrying away the victory.

For what weapons had they I pray you in the time of *Sampson*, did not he for want of other weapons with a jaw bone kill and destroy a thousand Philistines in a small time without any hurt to himself?

Now at this time if there had been any weapons of more danger put the case this. Although *Sampson* was charged upon such a sudden whereby he had no leisure to arm himself, yet you must understand and know, that his enemies came purposely to be revenged upon him, because he had burned up their corn: wherefore if there had been weapons they would have been so armed without all doubt or question, and so provided for him, that either they would have wounded or killed him, before he should have made such havoc or slaughter amongst them.

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Again, what weapons had they when *Shamgar* slew six hundred Philistines with an ox goad,³² as in the third of Judges there you may read it in the last verse.

But after this as the number of people began to multiply, and the malice, rage, and fury of man began to increase, first they began to revenge themselves with clubs, staves, slings, and darts. And afterward they studied and invented other weapons and armor for wars, as at the first beginning of wars they made iron chariots, and then they armed elephants, and horses, afterwards they found out the forging of swords, spears, bills, halberds, javelins and partizans, crossbows and longbows, and such like; and every kind of weapon for more advantage and danger one than another, still changing only to make trial of the best, for their advantage, and such they kept in use that were of greater force not only to terrify, but to hurt and destroy their enemies. But of late years they have changed all weapons for muskets, arquebus, and crossbows, calivers, pikes, swords, and rapiers, and such like manly weapons of great danger, especially unto the ignorant and unskillful.

Now therefore as we are provided of sundry kinds of dangerous weapons, I could wish every man to spend a little time in practicing to learn skill and cunning at such weapons, as with skill are most safe to defend, and yet most dangerous and hurtful to thy enemy, considering this that the skillful and cunning man fights without fear; for not only those which use the making of arms and weapons are well accepted of, wherein many are accounted famous, and thereby making a good living for their continual maintenance,

³² A cattle prod.

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but yet more accepted are they which can use weapons well both for defense and offense: for many thereby have gotten such credit throughout all the world, insomuch that kings and princes do adorn them which are excellent therein with the names of knights, and some with greater titles of honor: wherefore it is a great shame for any carrying the shape or personage of a man, but that he should be so cunning and so furnished with skill and with continual practice, so to use it, as not only to defend thy self, but also to speak and to discourse of weapons and arms in what company soever thou come into fitting such a matter.

The Romans soon after the invention of swords generally they grew to expert and cunning, that they were able and did set forth whole armies of sword-players, such as are now called fencers.

It is a woeful sight unto the skillful to see so many young gentlemen, which being once blindfolded with ignorance and for want of skill many times lose their lives in fight, without reason or judgment, and yet some such there are which will adventure; only they do it upon an aspiring mind, thinking thereby to get the praise of the world, which is to be accounted valorous, and tall men at arms, for to be accounted wise and valiant is every man's desire.

Wherefore as amongst the wise and ancient writers that ever wrote, we find the wise to provide in summer for winter, in time of peace for wars; for there is nothing so sure but as that after peace there will come wars, there is no man living that although he carries himself never so uprightly yet at one time or other he may be so wronged that he must needs

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fight: therefore he that is wise will be armed beforehand, not only with weapons, but skill; thereby to prevent a mischief if occasion serves, as you shall hear more at large in the next chapter.

Chapter IX

Shows what an excellent thing skill is, with persuasion to all men to forbear the maintaining of idle quarrels.

To show you what skill is it will be a hard question to decide, and a matter too deep for me to handle, for we see daily many principal and cunning men even at their wit's end in studying and devising skill and cunning in all arts and science, and yet to the end of their lives they find themselves ignorant in many things, and are still to learn, yea even in that which they have always been trained up unto.

Wherefore I think the ground of art and cunning is not to be found out, no although a man does travel more larger ground than the whole earth, or if he should fly above the clouds, or dive deeper than the sea, all which is impossible: wherefore seeing it is so large that I cannot compass it, so high I cannot reach it, and so deep a hidden secret, that I cannot sound the bottom of it; for I cannot travel so far, climb so high, nor wade so deep, yet so far have I travelled and so high have I climbed, and so deep have I waded, that I see art and skill so prevail with those which bend their minds thereunto, they become more famous than any other ordinary men are, for skill is such an excellent thing, that it abates the choler and

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courage of the hasty and furious man, so that he is tempered with discretion; even as iron being tempered with steel, makes a blade; whereas if it is all steel, it will be too brittle and soon broken; or all iron, then it will be too blunt: even so, he which is furious and hasty will be soon killed. Again, skill, use and exercise therein do overcome many ill humors, which without it, are never to be left, as you shall hear.

For, skill makes those hardy at their weapons, which are so timersome, as they will wink at every blow; yea, and if he were as fearful and as cowardly as a hare by nature, yet such a one (by skill) becomes, bold, hardy, and valorous; also (by use and practice) it makes a man to use both his hands alike: wherefore I would have no man that carries the personage or shape of a man, but he should learn as much skill in his weapons as possible he can; and likewise learn as many guards at each weapon as thou may, that thereby thou may be the better able to answer any man upon a good quarrel, if his skill and cunning were never so good, but he which has skill but at one weapon, and is acquainted but with one guard, and has but one kind of blow, or but one kind of thrust; I do not see how such a man should be able to defend himself from one that is skillful and cunning in many other guards, and many blows and thrusts; for one guard, one blow, or one thrust will quickly be worn threadbare; it is supposed, that if a horse did know his own strength, a man could not rule him; even so, for want of such manly knowledge, as everyone ought to be experienced in, do never come to the knowledge of their strength,

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nor dare not attempt anything worth the commendations of manhood, only for want of experience and practice; for little does any man know what good fortune is allotted out for him, and sure the greatest credit and honor that ever came to any man, was through skill in weapons: such an excellent armor is skill, that it makes a man fight without fear: and he which has it, will fight with such wariness, that he will hurt, and not be hurt himself, except it is by great odds of weapons, or more than one weapon at once.

He which is a man of his hands will have many tales brought him, but before thou give any credit unto a tale bearer, consider well the condition of the messenger, before thou put any confidence in his speeches, whether he is a drunkard, a coward, or a fool; for any of these three sorts of men, there is no credit nor trust to be given unto their speech. Again, a gentleman, or a man of any good fashion, ought not to carry tales: but if such a one does hear his friend wronged behind his back, he ought with discretion to answer him, in his friend's behalf, with reasonable words, and not to report unto his friend, the worst that he hears an idle fellow speak except it is a matter which concerns his life, then it is not amiss to warn thy friend, to the end he may be provided against such a mischief; but the carrying of every idle tale betwixt man and man, does much hurt, and sets whole households together by the ears. Again, he which is a carrier of tales, cannot truly deliver a man's speech, without adding or diminishing; and either of these two do alter the whole property of the speech which was first delivered, and it

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so falls out many times, that the tale bearer brings himself into many quarrels, and to be envied on both sides: therefore, he which can hear, and see, and say little, will find most quietness, for little said is soon answered: but he that talks much, can never place all his words well, nor please every man's humor: and surely tale bearers are the breeders of great mischief.

For many times upon others words some do bear malice one to another, without cause of desert, and yet occasion is taken, and perhaps none given neither; the one party does not know of the malice the other bears him of a long time, and this is not well, for if thou are grieved, reveal thy mind, and make a bolt or a shaft of it quickly, either to end it with weapons or with words or by the persuasions of friends, as occasion shall serve, when it comes in question, and then afterwards be friends, but at no hand, let no envious hatred remain in thy heart against any person, of what condition soever; but rather go unto him which spoke ill words against thee, and ask him in courteous means, but not in outrage and anger, until thou hear his tale; for the tale bearer it may be, is in the fault, in telling a tale to make a quarrel, when there is none meant.

Meddle not with great men which are above thy calling, for though they wrong thee, and that thou have a good quarrel, yet thou can get little by maintaining such a quarrel; for might (oftentimes) overcomes right, and the weakest go commonly to the walls: then is it better to bear the burden of the mighty, and endure their malice with patience and let such quarrels slip, rather than stir further

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in them, lest it be thy overthrow: and, he carries the most honorable mind, which in talking of his enemy, can so bridle his affections, as to use no railing, nor undecent speeches behind his enemy's back, for he that does so, dishonests himself: besides, those which hear him, will judge that he had rather fight with his tongue than with his sword.

Again, a man of great power and authority ought not to offer wrong unto any man of meaner sort: for it has been often seen, that a worm being trodden upon, will turn again; and many poor men will rather lose their lives, if so 'twere they durst adventure to challenge the rich for fear of the law, I do mean when they are oppressed, wronged, and disgraced by the rich and mighty men; for the law is a quirk to restrain or to check poor men's wills, for it does hamper and temper, and bring them into subjection: and as the old proverb goes, the rich men have the law in their own hands.

Even as the ignorant and unskillful do many times fear to displease a swaggerer or a common quarreler; even so poor men are afraid to offend the rich.

Now concerning a rich man, I remember a pretty example or a tale, and as I heard it, you shall hear it, there was a gentleman which built a gallant fair house, whom I will leave nameless, but he had many ploughs and carriages for timber, lime, and stones; some serving his present need, for love, some for money, and some for fear (as you shall hear) for at night, (when the carriage was ended) the gentleman called them one after another, and unto the first he said; What have you earned? Sir (said he) I came for love, and not for money. I thank you (said the gentleman.)

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So then he asked another, saying Sirrah, what came you for? Sir (said he) I am but a poor man, and I came for money. And so the gentleman paid him his wages: Then he called another, and asked him wherefore he came, or what he had deserved? Sir (said he) I came not to you for love, nor for money, but only for fear of your displeasure. Said the gentleman, why are thou afraid of me which never did thee hurt in all my life? Yea, but sir (said he) I have seen many poor men envied, wronged, and imprisoned many times for ill will by the rich, when they have but little deserved it; thereby showing, that some rich men will bear such malice unto a poor man, if he shall deny him such carriage, or if he does not help him in the harvest, or if he shall deny him the selling of a horse, ground, or chattel, that the gentleman has a mind unto; for many of them think that a poor man should deny them nothing, but if they do, a grudging hatred continues until they have revenged it; but if in a long time they cannot find a hole in his coat, whereby to revenge their malice: yet when a press³³ comes, then they put him forth for a soldier, although there are twenty others in the same parish, which would willingly serve, and likewise that might be far better spared, and a great deal more fit, for an unwilling servant seldom does his master good service.

³³ Refers to press masters, or press gangs, for the purpose of impressing men into military service.

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Chapter X

The tricks of a coward

The first reason which I will set down, whereby you many know a coward, is, by the lading of himself with weapons; for I have known a very fearful man to see to, and yet a coward, carry a Welsh hook upon his back, a close hilted sword and dagger, yet (mistake me not) for I do not call every man that is so weaponed, a coward, but stand still a little, and you shall know whom I mean.

When a man (upon a good quarrel) does challenge a coward into the field, it may be it comes to this point; where shall we meet says the one? In such a place or such a place says the other; but in the end, they make a secret conclusion, and choice of a place is agreed upon; but then, if the coward goes into the field at all, he will be sure to go where he will not meet with his enemy, but to one of the afore-named places, and there he will stay awhile, and if any company comes by, he will tell them, that he stays to fight with such a man, because they shall note him for a tall man of his hands: and then at his coming back again, amongst his companions, he will brag and boast that he has been in the field, to meet with such a man, and he came not; when the other all the while was at the place where they concluded to have met.

Again, some cowards will so dare and brag out a man in company, with such swaggering words, whereby the hearers should think there were not a better man to be found: and if it is in a fair or market,

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then he will draw his weapons, because he knows that he shall be soon parted, for the people will say, that such a one and such a one made a great fray today, but I account this but pot-valor, or a coward's fray to fight in the street, for a man can give no due commendations of manhood unto such fighters, for there is no valor in it.

Again, I have known a coward cunningly challenge a very sufficient man, and they have met in the field, but at their meeting, the coward will say thus unto him, Now I see thou are a man, and I will take thy part against all men, but I will never draw my sword against thee, that which I did was but to try thee.

Also a cunning coward, when he has wronged or misused a man, the party grieved does challenge the field of him, then he will bear it out with great brags and high looks, enough to fear any man, that will be feared with words, showing himself outwardly as though he would fight indeed; for the coward will say unto the challenger, Thou will not meet me, if I should appoint thee a place, for thou dare not answer me: for be it known unto thee, if I unsheathe my sword, I will not draw him in vain; but now if he see these brags cannot dismay nor assuage the fury of the other, but that he will needs fight, then he assays other ways, if it is one of his acquaintance, he will say, The world shall not speak of it, that we two should fall out: or, if it is to an inferior, then he will stand upon his gentility, saying that he will not do him that credit, for thou are a base fellow, a fellow of no fashion, to compare with me. I have known in a strange place, that a scurvy

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base fellow will stand so much upon his gentility, and think to make the world believe he is a great man in his own country. Also, in a tavern or such like place, if there is company ready to hold him, then he will draw his dagger upon very small occasion, showing himself resolute, as though he would fight with the devil; and then the company (with a little persuasion) brings them friends, which I discommend not, but I discommend the falling out about a pipe of tobacco, or a cup of wine or beer. But of this I have spoken something before, and shall have occasion to speak more at large of it hereafter; But first, to end this I have in hand, many a coward may say, when he has lived so long in the world until the world is weary of his company, I may be the best man in the world, for I was never yet tried, nor never drew my sword in earnest in all my life hitherto: again, it is good sleeping in a whole skin.³⁴

And a wise or a valorous man may even say so as well as a coward: for I say a man may very well answer a good quarrel, if occasion is offered, yet sleep in a whole skin; why shall we fear to go to our beds, because some die in their beds; some die at sea, and therefore shall we fear to cross the sea; some fall by chance, shall we never therefore rise for fear of falling? And what is all this? Nothing, but to show, that there is less danger in fighting a good quarrel with skill and discretion, upon cold blood: but of this I have spoken sufficiently already, if words would serve. But if I should write a whole volume of one matter, yet it would serve to small purpose to some; and so where we left there we will begin,

³⁴ This proverb is also used by George Silver, in his *Paradoxes of Defence*, page 8.

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for what I have said before, it is but as it were a deaw,³⁵ but this last shower shall wet them to the skin; a coward will have a sword or a rapier, for length (in a manner) like a half pike: but since the use of short swords came, you cannot know them by that mark, as you might before, for many of them are got into the fashion, and it is the fittest weapon that ever came for their purpose; for short swords are worn both of one and other, more for the fashion than for any other purpose: but because men of good worth do wear them, therefore I will not call it the fool's fashion, but let every man alone with his humor. Again, a coward will have as good and as gallant a weapon as may be gotten for money; but I do not commend the man by the largeness nor goodness of his weapons, neither he that has many hurts and scars about his body. There is no due commendation to be given of a judge, by his scarlet gown; neither can a man commend the skillfulness of the mariner by his wearing of a great whistle: gold is not certainly known to be gold, before it is tried, everything is not as it seems to be for many a man carries the shape and personage of a man: but when they come to the touch like gold to be tried, prove but shadows, as that which is like gold many times does prove worse than copper: even so, there is no certain true report can be given of a man touching manhood upon the first fight, without some trial. You shall seldom see a coward use his weapon, except it is upon a drunken humor, or else, when he is driven to it by extremity, and that he sees no remedy, but that he must needs fight, but he will many times be drawing in some alehouse

³⁵ This is likely intended to be "adieu", thus meaning he intends to stop belaboring his point.

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or tavern, and there he will be fencing with him, and showing his tricks, thinking to make the company believe, that he is an excellent fellow of his hands: and there many will be hewing of bedposts, or table boards, or many such like tricks he will use: then some cowards will (by casting abroad of libels) and by night walking, do many mischievous tricks, only to revenge a malice which they bear in mind, because they cannot revenge it manfully, and yet a coward will grieve and fret if justly he hears any other to be commended of any man for his manhood and valor, for he would have no man better than himself. And if such a one bears office in city or town, he will at no hand abide to hear, that a master of defense should inhabit in the place where he governs.³⁶

Also if any other commends a man that is a man indeed, a coward will discommend him saying, he is nobody; or he is not the man you take him for; with such like disabling speeches, for if a coward cannot disgrace a man with deeds to his face, then he will deprive him with words behind his back.

Also a coward delights to breed quarrels betwixt man and man, and to set such as are named to be men of their hands, together by the ears by false reports, and by carrying of tales, and by making of molehills mountains, of half a word a long tale, to the hurt of others, and no good to themselves: and what is the chief cause of all cowardly minds but only ignorance, and want of skill: but to conclude, never trust a coward in his fury, nor suffer him not to come nearer than the point of thy rapier, and there let him tell his tale, but let him have no advantage

³⁶ Though I know of no evidence, it would be interesting to know whether Swetnam was on this last point referring to personal experience.

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upon thee by no kind of illusions, especially if he is thy professed enemy.

That he is a coward which practices the throwing of a dagger or the darting of a rapier, I will not say, but he which puts it in practice upon a man, is a coward, for if he kills a man with such a trick, in my mind it is pity but he should die for it: and so I will end with that example of a cowardly murderer of one *Cosby*, whose murdering hands by a cozening device bereaved the Lord of *Burke* of his life, and as I heard it, thus it was: a quarrel grew between them, and the field was appointed, where they both met, and being ready to charge each other, *Cosby* said My Lord you have spurs which may annoy you: therefore if you please put them off, and even as he was unbuckling of his spurs, this cowardly and murdering minded *Cosby* ran him through with a mortal wound, whereof he died presently.

Now to my own knowledge, My Lord *Burke* was very skillful in his weapons, and sufficient to have answered any man being equally weaponed, or upon equal terms, therefore hard was his hap to meet with such a cowardly murderer, for his death is lamented of many, and *Cosby* was hanged for it.³⁷

Yet touching this matter, here follows another example, as I heard it I will declare it: thus, there was a murderer who escaping the pitiful hands of the merciful judge, after he had killed two men, being taken and apprehended for the third murder, and being arraigned before the same judge which had before shown pity, began now to condemn this murderer, and give the sentence of death, and so began to declare to this murderer that had small grace,

³⁷ This episode is related in Stow's *Annales* for the year 1591. The murder happened on the 14th of January, though according to Stow's account, Cosby stabbed Lord Burke through the shoulder with his rapier, whereon Lord Burke fell down. Cosby then stabbed him an additional twenty times with his dagger. Lord Burke died two hours later, but not before relating his tale to his footman, who found him. According to G.B. Harrison's *Elizabethan Journals*, the case inspired at least two ballads and three pamphlets (see the note for 25th January, 1591, p 353).

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which could not beware being twice warned, but must now kill the third man: therefore thou (said the judge) well deserve death, and death thou shall have: when the murderer saw that he must die, he said thus unto the judge: My Lord you do me wrong to condemn me for the killing of three men, for it was you that killed two of them: yea said the judge, how can that be? marry thus: if you had hanged me for the first I would have not killed the other two: therefore it is pity in my mind, that a man-slayer should live to kill two men, but to be hanged for the first if it is not in his own defense, or upon a very good quarrel, and so I will strike sail for a while.³⁸

Chapter XI

Questions and Answers.

Scholar: I have harkened all this while unto your discourse, the which I like very well of, but now I am desirous if it please you to be instructed with some of your skill.

Master: At what weapon are you desirous to learn.

Scholar: Such as you think fit for my defense.

Master: Then I hold it necessary for thee to learn the perfect use of six kinds of weapons, not that thou should still be armed with so many weapons, but with the skill of them, for that will not burden thee nothing at all: for thou may in travel by chance meet at sundry times, with sundry men, which are armed with sundry kinds of weapons, now if thou are provided beforehand with skill at such a weapon, as by chance thou may meet withal, knowing the danger

³⁸ To strike sail can mean to submit, or here, means the defendant rests his case.

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thou will the better prevent the mischief.

Scholar: What are the six weapons which you would have me to learn.

Master: The first and two principal weapons are the rapier and dagger, and the staff, the other four are the backsword, the single rapier, the long sword and dagger, and the short sword and dagger, but with the two former weapons thou may encounter by skill with any man in the world, the rapier and dagger against any weapon of the same length, at single hand and with a staff against any two handed weapon, as against the welsh hook, two hand sword, the halberd, partisan, and glaive, or any other weapon of the like advantage: but provided always thou must be sure armed with skill at those two especially: and with all the rest if thou can, for then may thou be the bolder to encounter with any man at any of the others, if thy enemy charges thee upon the sudden with a contrary weapon, thou will presently know what thy enemy can do with his weapon, which if thou have no skill in, it will seem the more fearful unto thee.

For if *Goliath* had been experienced in the cunning of a sling, he would not have condemned *David* so rashly, nor made so light account of him as he did: but if thou have skill with such a weapon, as thou are to encounter against, it will be nothing troublesome unto thee, for there is no way to hit, but there is a way to defend, as thou shall hear more at large, but first tell me what thou are, and thy bringing up.

Scholar: I was a yeoman's son, and always brought up idle under my father, but now my father is dead, and that little which he left me for the most part I

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have consumed and spent, wherefore I pray you direct me my course, by some of your good counsel, for I have little to trust to, but only my hands, therefore I am willing to learn anything which may gain me a good report, and something beneficial for my maintenance.

Master: Indeed means to live and a good name withal, is more than gold, and because thou show thy self willing to be instructed, thou shall hear briefly what I would do if myself were in thy case, for if I should enter into large discourses I might thereby well make thee weary with the hearing of it, but perhaps never the wiser, and so thereby thou might well give me occasion to account the time very ill spent in writing of it. Nevertheless I will reckon little of my labor, for I am in hope to do thee good, for thou must or should know not only how to use and govern thy weapon, but also thy self, in all companies, and in all places, where thou shall happen to come; for kind and courteous behavior wins favor and love wheresoever thou go, but much the better if it is tempered with manhood and skill of weapons. Now some will say that skill in weapons is good most chiefly for gentlemen, but I say it should be in all men, for I have known and seen many poor men's sons come to great honor and credit, and chiefly it was because they had skill in weapons, wherefore in my mind it is the most excellent quality of all both for high and low, rich and poor. But when thou are experienced at thy weapon, I would wish thee to make choice of one of those three exercises for thy continual expenses and maintenance so long as thou live, and not live like a drone upon

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other men's labors, for lest in time if thou were never so good a man, yet everyone would wax weary of thy company.

Scholar: I pray you, what are the three exercises which you would counsel me to take my choice of?

Master: Marry, thy self being of reasonable good years, and having neither lands, nor but little living left thee, choose whether thou will go learn some trade or occupation, or else go into the wars, or be a serving man; for when thou have skill in thy weapon, thou must have some means to maintain thine expenses; for idle hands will make a hungry belly, and a hungry belly must needs have meat, and meat will not be bought in the market for honesty without money.

Scholar: Which of these exercises would you advise me to follow?

Master: I commend them all, but yet an occupation is a more certain stay unto a man, both in his youth and in his age, than any of the other two are; and as thou are in years, so ought thou to be the more witty, if it is not so, it should be so, and a man of reason will the sooner be his crafts-master. A man is never too old to learn, especially anything that may be to the good and profit of the commonwealth; and it is better to learn late than never: and he that has a trade, let him look unto it, and he which will not labor, let him not eat, says Saint *Paul*.³⁹

Scholar: What trade would you have me to learn?

Master: Such a trade or occupation, as thy mind bends most unto, and then to apply thy self to it, and follow it, and strive by honest means and painful labor to be rich, for thou may be poor when

³⁹ 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

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thou will, but there is no trade good to him which wills not to follow it, for he that has never so many trades, and yet gives his mind to drunkenness, and loves to lead an idle and loitering life: such a one will never thrive, but sit in an alehouse, and complain, that the world is hard, and that work is very scant; indeed, so it is with such a one, for a man can seldom find them in their own houses, whereby to put work into their hands, but those that do look for work, and attend it, need never to want work, but will always be in other men's work, or else they will be able (by their good husbandry) to set themselves awork, and it is a very bad commodity, that will not yield money at one time or other.

Do you understand me? If not, I will make it more plain, hearken to that which follows, then above all, give not thy mind to ranging or running from town to town, or from country to country, for a rolling stone will never gather moss, the grasshopper will rather die than go out of the grass; and thou (with good behavior) may better live with a groat in thine own country, than with a pound in a strange place, for in a strange place, although thou be of good behavior, yet many will fear thee, and be loath to give thee credit, and will think, if thou were of good behavior, thou should have had no need to come out of thine own country: again, thy flying away will be a great discredit unto thee, if thou think to come home again; for every man almost will be loath to put credit, or anything of value into the hands of a ranger, because that they are not resolved that thy mind is settled to stay in thine own country, when thou do turn

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from thy race again. Many men there are that consume their time in ranging abroad, and at the last, seeing the vanity of the world, they recall themselves, and repent of the time which they have consumed in travel: but then they have experience although no money; now experience is no coiner, nor a tradesman worth a pin without his tools; for what avails it to be a cunning goldsmith, and have neither gold nor silver: few there are that will trust a traveller any further than they can see him, especially, if he has been one that has served as a soldier in a foreign country: therefore, although home be homely, endeavor thy self to live by honest and good means, and be contented with thine homely home; but beware, spend not Michaelmas's rent in Midsummer's quarter abroad,⁴⁰ as many bad husbands use to do.

Now if a trade is too tedious for thee to learn, or too painful for thee to follow, then go thou unto the wars, and serve either by sea or land, as thy affections shall best lead thee unto: but in seeking by the wars to get wealth, if thou lose thy life while thou are young, thou need not to care for old age; yet by the wars (if fortune serves) but to speak more Christian-like (if God wills) thou may get that in one hour, which (with good discretion and government) thou may be the better for, so long as thou live: the goods which do come by the wars, are neither light come by, nor godly gotten (in my mind;) yet many think that wealth gotten by the wars, is easily gotten; for so it appears by the prodigal and vain spending of it: wherefore I would have thee furnish thy self with discretion

The wars are not like throwing of snow balls: far deceived are they that so think.

⁴⁰ Michaelmas and Midsummer are two of four quarter days, or dates during the year in which servants were hired and financial accounts settled. Michaelmas is September 29th, and Midsummer day is June 24th. The other two quarter days are Lady Day (March 25th) and Christmas (December 25th). Swetnam is here giving advice about saving and spending money wisely.

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and knowledge beforehand, that thereby thou may the better use wealth when thou have it; but then thou must not abuse it, as many other soldiers have done heretofore: for I have known many get both goods and money by the wars, but have made no other reckoning, but as one would say, lightly come lightly go; and so suffering it to melt away like butter in the sun: therefore if thou happen, by the wars, upon that may do thee good, keep it warily, and spend it wisely: for it is said, a dog shall have a day, and a man shall have his time; but if he lets time slip, she is bald behind, and therefore no hold to be taken of her after her back is once turned; for I have known many by the wars, get at one voyage, enough to live by all their lives long, if with discretion it had been governed; but they have consumed it in so short a time, that a man would think it impossible; and then to the wars again they go in hope of the like fortune, but they have not in seven years, nay all their life time gotten so much, as they spent in one day, when they had crowns.

Then consider with thy self, that if thou do light upon wealth, that thou come not light by it, if thou get it by the wars, though indeed it is gotten in an hour, yet it is gotten with great hazard of thy life, and no doubt it is displeasing to God, for goods gotten by the wars serve but for spending money for the time present; those which do save them, and hoard them up, they are consumed before two generations do pass, yea though it were abundant, it comes to nothing, as in my farewell to *Plymouth* more at large appears.

Goods gotten by the wars are like a live bird in the hand, which, the hand no sooner opens but she straight flies away.

Now (in my mind) the third and worst choice

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I have left till the last, and that is a serving man's life, yet it is as happens, for some happen into good service, and some again spend seven years, yea all their lifetime, and so they grow the older, little the wiser, nor never a whit the richer; and some of them never care so they have from hand to mouth, nor never think upon a rainy day until it comes, and gentlemen are wise for they will not keep a dog and bark themselves, neither will they keep a cat except she will catch mice; therefore if thou wilt be a serving man thou must take great pains, otherwise thou wilt have small gains at the end of thy service; yea though thou art never so painful and dutiful, yet when thou look to receive thy reward, there may be such great fault found in thy service, that all the golden words and fair promises which thou have been deluded and haled forward withal, they may all come to nothing except thy bare wages, there may be a bill of caveling put in for the rest, saying if thou had been an honest man, thou should have had this or that, if thou live never so uprightly, yet there may be faults found, for it is a very easy matter to find a staff to beat a dog withal, but because I cannot well display the life of a serving man, but either I shall displease the master or the man, or both; therefore I will here conclude, and leave the rest to thy daily experience, and so for awhile harken unto the skill of weapons.

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Chapter XII

Shows of seven principal rules whereon true defense is grounded.

1. A good guard
2. True observing of distance.
3. To know the place.
4. To take time.
5. To keep space.
6. Patience.
7. Often practice.

The first is to learn a good and a sure guard for the defense of thy body, as when you come to the use of weapons, as here presently after shall follow, and when thou have thy guard it is not enough to know it, but to keep it so long as thou are within reach or danger of thy enemy.

To observe distance, by which is meant that thou should stand so far off from thine enemy, as thou can, but reach him when thou do step forth with thy blow or thrust, and thy foremost foot and hand must go together, the which distance may be twelve feet with a rapier, or with a sword four feet long, and yet thy best foot which should be the hindermost foot of a right handed man, should be moored fast and keep his standing without moving an inch, for then he will be the readier to draw back thy forefoot and body into the right place of distance again for that thou must do upon every charge, whether thou hit thy enemy or not; whereas if in stepping forth with thy forefoot, when thou do charge thy enemy either with blow or thrust, thou suffer thy hinder foot to drag in after the other, then thou break thy distance, and thereby endanger thy body.

There is no way better to get the true observation of

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distance, but by often practice either with thy friend, or else privately in a chamber against a wall, standing twelve feet off with thy hindermost foot, and thy weapon four feet long or thereabout, for a good guard and distance are the main and principal points of all.

To know the place, this may be taken three ways, as this, the place of thy weapons, the place of defense and the place of offense: the place for the holding of thy weapons, thou shall know when thou come to it as I said before, but it is chiefly meant here the place of offense; thou must mark which is the nearest part of thine enemy towards thee, and which lies most unregarded, whether it is his dagger hand, his knee, or his leg, or where thou may best hurt him at a large distance without danger to thy self, or without killing of thine enemy.

To take time, that is to say when opportunity is proffered thee, either by his lying unregarded or upon thy enemy's proffer, then make a quick answer, I mean it must be done upon the very motion of his proffer, thou must defend and seek to offend all at once, for thou must not suffer thy enemy to recover his guard, for if thou do thou lose thy advantage. But thou must answer him more quicker than I can speak it, for if thou lose thy answer, and charge thy enemy when he is guarded, thou give thy enemy that advantage which thou might have had thy self, for he which makes the first assault does endanger himself most, if he is not very expert and cunning in his business, otherwise a man of reasonable skill may hurt him by making a quick answer.

To keep space this may be conceived two ways;

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the one in the space between thy enemy and thy self, this I call distance, and I have already spoken of it; but the space which in this place I will speak of, is to advise thee to keep a certain space betwixt every assault, I mean if thou charge thy enemy either with blow or thrust, recover thy weapons into their place, and draw thy self into thy guard again, and so preparing thy self for to defend, and likewise to make a fresh assault with discretion, but not charging thy enemy rashly or furiously, for hastiness is foolishness: for if fury has the upper hand, and so you both strike and thrust, without reason and judgment, I say in such a case the skillfulest man that is, may be so well hit as he hits another.

The next is patience, and that is one of the greatest virtues that can be in a man: the wise man says, he is a fool which cannot govern himself; and he very unfit to rule which cannot rule himself; therefore, though thou be hasty or choleric by nature, and by crossing thou are moved unto anger; yet I say, let the bridle of reason and judgment so govern and overrule thy hasty affections, that in no case anger gets the upper hand; but of this there is more at large spoken in the eighth chapter. Now the last thing that I will note here, is often practice, for without practice the proverb says, a man may forget his *pater noster*: for practice (with moderation) is, not only the healthiest thing in the world for the body: but it is likewise as defensive for the same. For skill to every reasonable man is a friend, so that with moderation it is used, and so long as it remains in those of good temper; for unto such, skill brings no more presumption nor fury than as if they had it not: for

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in the field, those which I mean will use it as if they were in a school, by which means such have great advantage of the ignorant and unskillful; for those which are unskillful, are neither certain of their defense nor offense; but what they do is upon a kind of foolish bold hardiness, or as I may say by haphazard or chance noddy: and therefore (gentle reader) resolve upon skill and knowledge which follows here immediately.

The true guard for the defense, either of blow, or thrust, with rapier and dagger, or sword and dagger.

Keep thy rapier hand so low as the pocket of thy hose at the arm's end, without bowing the elbow joint, and keep the hilt of thy dagger right with thy left cheek, and the point something stooping toward the right shoulder, and bear him out stiff at the arm's end, without bowing thine elbow joint likewise, and the point of thy rapier two inches within the point of thy dagger, neither higher, nor lower; but if the point of thy rapier is two or three inches short of touching thy dagger, it is no matter, but if they join it is good; likewise, keep both your points so high as you may see your enemy clearly with both your eyes, betwixt your rapier and dagger, and bowing your head something toward the right shoulder, and your body bowing forwards, and both thy shoulders, the one so near thine enemy as the other, and the thumb of thy rapier hand, not upon thy rapier, according unto the usual fashion of the vulgar sort, but upon the nail of thy forefinger, which will lock thine hand the stronger about the

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handle of thy rapier, and the heel of thy right foot should join close to the middle joint of the great toe of thy left foot, according to this picture, yet regard chiefly the words rather than the picture.



Carry the edge of thy rapier upward, and downward, for then thou shall defend a blow upon the edge of thy rapier, by bearing thy rapier after the rule of the backsword, for this is the strongest and surest carriage of him.

But now it is but a vain thing to go about to practice after my direction, except thou understand my meaning, and follow my counsel, as by words so plain as I can, I have set down, both before and after: for if thou observe one thing, and not another, it will profit thee but little, and thus: if thou place thy

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weapons in order; and then, if thy hand, foot, or body are out of order, then it will be to small purpose to proceed in thy practice: again, if thou frame thy body right, and thy weapons, and thy hand, and thy foot; yet if thou do not observe a true distance withal, then thy practice will be little available to thee: wherefore at the first beginning of thy practice, take a good advisement, and be perfect by often reading of this book, so to begin well; for if thou have been used to set thy feet abroad in thy former practice, as most men do, then it will be hard for thee to leave thy old wont.

Now, if thou will break thy self of that fashion and practice after my rules, then will I show thee by and by; for when thou have my fashion, thou may go to thine own again when thou will, if in trial thou find it better.

The best way to bring thy feet to a sure standing, both for defense and offense, is when thou do practice with thy friend or companion; at first get thy back to the wall, and let him that plays with thee stand about twelve feet distance, and set thy left heel close to the wall, and thy right foot heel to the great joint of the left foot great toe, and when thou intend to offend thy enemy, either with blow or thrust, then step forth with thy right foot, and hand together, but keep thy left foot fast moored like an anchor, to pluck home thy body and thy right foot into his place and distance again; use this fashion but three or four times, and it will bring thee to a true standing with thy foot, and it will be as easy to thee as any other way; whereas if thou practice in a large room without any stop to set thy foot

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against, then will thy left foot be always creeping away, so that although thou would refrain the setting abroad of thy feet, yet thou cannot, especially if thou have been used to set them abroad heretofore.

Now your body and weapons being thus placed as aforesaid, if your enemy strikes a blow at you, either with sword or rapier, bear your rapier against the blow, so well as your dagger according unto the rule of the backsword, for in taking the blow double you shall the more surely defend your head, if the blow does chance to light near the point of your dagger, for if you trust to your dagger only, the blow may hap to glance over the point of your dagger, and endanger your head, and having defended the blow double (as aforesaid) presently turn down the point of your rapier towards your enemy's thigh, or any part of your enemy's body, as you list yourself; and with your thrust step forth also with your foot and hand together, and so making a quick answer, you may endanger your enemy in what place you will yourself, before he recovers his guard and distance again, and always set your rapier foot right before the other, and so near the one to the other as you can; and if thou are right handed then thy right foot must be foremost, if left handed, then thy left foot, and standing thus in thy guard, look for thy advantage, I mean where thine enemy lies most unguarded; but first thou must be perfect in the knowledge of the true and perfect guard thy self, so shall thou know the better where thine enemy lies open, then thou must step forth with thy forefoot, and hand together, to offend thine enemy in such a place as thou find unguarded; but so soon as thou have

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presented thy thrust, whether thou hit or miss, fall back again to recover thy guard and distance so soon as thou can, but stand always fast on thine hindermost foot, I mean whether thou strike or thrust, and then shall thou recover thy guard; and having recovered thy weapons in their right place, then thou must also traverse thy ground so leisureably, that thou may be sure to have one foot firm on good ground before thou pluck up the other; for else, going fast about, thou may quickly be down if the ground is not even. Also have a special care that thou are not too busy in making of play, though choler or stomach provoke thee thereunto. Furthermore, in standing in thy guard, thou must keep thy thighs close together, and the knee of thy foreleg bowing backward rather than forward; but thy body bowing forward; for the more thou hollow thy body, the better, and with less danger shall thou break thine enemy's thrust, before it comes near to endanger thy body; and when thou break a thrust, thou must but let fall the point of thy dagger, but not thy dagger arm, for some will throw their dagger arm back behind them when they break a thrust; he that so does cannot defend a second thrust if his enemy should charge him again suddenly.

The reasons of this guard.

First, the points of your weapons being closed, your enemy cannot offend you with a wrist blow, which otherwise may be struck to your face betwixt your points: likewise, there is a falling thrust that may hit any man which lies open with his points by following it into his face or breast, and thrusting

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it home withal: also, if you carry your rapier point under your dagger, your own rapier may hinder you, for by turning down of your dagger point, to defend the body from your enemy's point, according unto the first of the four defensible ways, as hereafter follows: then your own dagger may hit your own rapier, and so your rapier will be as it were a stumbling block, so that you cannot discharge your enemy's thrust clean from your body; and also by striking your dagger upon your rapier will be a hindrance unto you, that you cannot make a quick answer, by chopping out your point presently upon your defense: for if you have any hindrance at all, then your chief time of offense is spent, for before you can recover your rapier, your enemy will have recovered his guard, and he being in his guard your proffer of offense is in vain: for if you will hit your enemy, your offense and defense must be done all with one motion, whereas if you continue a space betwixt your defense and your offense, then is your best time of offense spent, for when your enemy charges you, either with blow or thrust, at that very instant time, his face, his rapier, arm, shoulder, knee, and leg are all discovered, and lie open, except the oppressor is very cunning in recovering his guard hastily again, or he may defend himself with his dagger, if he bears him stiffly out at the arm's end, for in your offense the dagger hand should be born out so far as the rapier hand goes, which must be done by practice and great carefulness; for many when they do make their assault, they will put out their rapier, and pluck in their dagger, thereby endangering themselves greatly: for except that the dagger arm is

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kept straight, and born out stiff, it is hard to defend either blow or thrust.

A thrust may be defended four ways.

The first is with the dagger, only by turning of the point down, and turning thy hand-wrist about withal, without bowing the elbow joint of thy dagger arm, but only turning thy dagger round, making as it were a round circle, and so presently bring up the point of thy dagger in his place again.

Now the second defense is with the dagger likewise, but then you must bear the hilt of your dagger so low as your girdle stead,⁴¹ and the point more upright than is described in the first picture, and in your defense of a thrust, you must bear your dagger hand stiff over your body, without letting fall the point but still keeping him upright.

The third way to break a thrust, is, with the single rapier; this defense will defend all thy body from a thrust against a rapier and dagger; and likewise it is a sure defense for thine hand, if thou have not a close hilted dagger, when thy enemy does proffer a thrust, pluck in thy dagger hand, and put out thy rapier arm, and bear him over thy body, the point bowing toward thy left side, breaking the thrust with the edge of thy rapier, keeping thy point upright: but when I come to the single rapier, then you shall see it more at large.

The fourth way is to defend a thrust with both your weapons together, and that you may do three manner of ways, either with the points of both your weapons

⁴¹ The waist.

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upwards, or both downward, upward you may frame yourself into two guards, the first is according as I have described afore, the points being close according to the picture, so carry them both away together against your enemy's thrust breaking towards your left side; the other high guard is to put your rapier on the outside of your dagger, and with your dagger make a cross, as it were, by joining him in the midst of your rapier, so high as your breast, and your dagger hilt in his usual place, and to defend your thrust, turn down the point of your rapier suddenly, and force him down with your dagger, by letting them fall both together: this way you may defend a thrust before it comes within three feet of your body; and this way defends the thrust of a staff, having but only a rapier and dagger, as you shall hear more when I come to the staff: for it is good to be provided with the best way, if a sudden occasion is offered: and for the blow of a staff, you may very easily defend with a rapier and dagger, by bearing him double; and so having defended the blow, go in hastily upon him, for there is no standing out long against a staff, and so likewise upon defense of a thrust you must be very nimble in your going in within the point of his staff, I mean as soon as your enemy's thrust is passed under your rapier arm, for that way the thrust of the staff should go.

Three manner of ways for the holding of a rapier.

These are three ways for the holding of a rapier, the one with the thumb forward or upon the rapier blade, and that I call the natural fashion, there

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is another way, and that is with the whole hand within the pommel of thy rapier, and the thumb locking in of the forefinger, or else they must both join at the least: this is a good holding at single rapier.

Then the third is but to have only the forefinger and thy thumb within the pommel of thy rapier, and thy other three fingers about thy pommel, and bear the button of thy pommel against the inside of thy little finger; this is called the Stokata fashion, and these two last are the surest and strongest ways: after a little practice, thou may use them all three in thy practice, and then repose thy self upon that which thou find best, but at some times, and for some purpose all these kinds of holding thy rapier may stead thee, for a man may perform some manner of slips and thrusts, with one of these three sorts of holding thy weapon; and thou cannot do the same with neither of the other: as thus, thou may put in a thrust with more celerity, holding him by the pommel, and reach farther than thou can do, if thou hold him on either of the two other fashions.

Again, thou may turn in a slip, or an overhand thrust, if thou put thy thumb upon thy rapier according as I have set it down, calling it the natural fashion, and is the first of three ways for holding of thy rapier; and this fashion will be a great strength to thee, to give a wrist blow, the which blow a man may strike with his rapier, because it is of small force, and consumes little time, and neither of the other two fashions of holding will not perform neither of those three things; for if thou hold thy rapier either of the two second ways, thou cannot turn in a slip, nor an overhand thrust, nor give a

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wrist blow so speedily, nor so strong: wherefore it is good to make a change of the holding of thy weapon for thine own benefit, as thou shall see occasion: and likewise to make a change of thy guard, according as thou see thy best advantage; I mean if thou are hardly matched, then betake thee unto thy surest guard, but if thou are matched with an unskillful man, then with skill thou may defend thy self, although thou lie at random.

The reason that your points should be so high, as you may see your enemy plainly and clearly under them, is for a sure defense of a blow, if your enemy should charge you therewith to either side [sic] the head, then bear them both double together, and having defended the blow, presently turn down the point of your rapier toward your enemy's thigh, and with turning your knuckles inward, step forth with foot and hand together, whether you hit or miss, retreat nimbly into your guard and distance again.

And although I do advise you to keep the point of your rapier so high, yet withal I do warn you, that you may have a special care to fall your point, and withal thrust him out, if your enemy does overreach or press in upon you, whether it is upon choler, or upon stomach, or upon a kind of foolish bold hardiness, or if he makes a passage upon you, or if he does break distance by any of those ways, although he does it never so actively, yet may you defend yourself with your dagger and either offend your enemy with a sudden falling of the point, and with the same motion chop in with a thrust to that part which lies most discovered as you may quickly

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perceive when you see his lying.

The cunningest man that is, and if he meets with one skillful, with whom is he is to encounter withal, cannot beforehand say in such place I will sure hit thee; no more, than a gamester when he goes to play can say before he begins, that he will sure win, for if he does, he may be proved a liar if his cunning were never so good.

So that beforehand you cannot determine where to hit your enemy, but when you see your enemy's guard, then it is easy to judge where it is open, if thou know a close guard thy self, for he which cannot write himself, can give but small judgment whether another writes well or ill, and if thine enemy does encroach within thy distance, then be doing with him betimes in the very instant of his motion whether it is motion of his body, or the motion of his weapon, or in the motion of both together: put out thy point, but not too far, but as thou may have thy rapier under command for thy own defense, and also to provide him ready again to make a full thrust home upon a greater advantage, for if thou answer a full thrust home, in the instant of thy enemy's assault, thou may endanger thy self if thy enemy does falsify his thrust, and therefore make your thrust short at the first, or if your enemy does bear his points anything abroad, then you may fall in betwixt them, either to his face or breast, or if his forefoot stands two feet distant or less from the other if he stands not close, then you may hurt him in the knee or leg, either with thrust or blow as he stands in his guard without any danger to yourself, and that is no killing place.

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Likewise it is said before look under both your weapons, if with one eye you look over either of weapons, you may be hit on the same side, either face, head, or shoulder, either with thrust or blow before you can put up either of your weapons in his place to defend it, and this know and remember it well, it is the nature of an Englishman to strike with what weapon soever he fights withal, and not one in twenty but in fury and anger will strike unto no other place but only to the head, therefore always if you fight with rapier and dagger, yet expect a blow so well as a thrust, and always defend the blow double as aforesaid, but if your rapier point is down under your dagger, you cannot put him up time enough to defend a blow, but must take it single on the dagger, or on the pate, for if your skill were never so good trusting to the dagger only you may be deceived by reason of the sharpness of your dagger, if the blow lights near the point it may glance over, and so hit you on the head, and also by reason of the shortness of your dagger which are now most commonly worn of all men, for I have known men of good skill deceived by trusting to the point, or dagger only for the defense of a blow, the dagger is not sure to defend it.

But when you make any play to your enemy whether it is offer, or an answer, stop, right as a line forwards from your left foot, for if you stop half a foot wide with the forefoot of the straight arm as it were by rule, then you lose half a foot of your space betwixt you and your enemy, and if you step likewise a foot wide, then you lose likewise a foot

For look how much you step wide you lose so much ground forwards.

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of advantage. For your instruction herein, when you practice in a chamber, look what board you stand upon, you should in delivering either of blow or thrust, always step forth with your right foot upon the same board which the left foot stands on, for look how much you left your forefoot wide of the straight line towards your enemy, you lose so much in your reach forward, as in your practice you may see the trial and used often in practice in some chambers with your friend until you are perfect, and in your practice, keep your left foot fast moored, that as an anchor pulls home the ship, so the left foot must pluck home the right foot and body into the right place of distance again, or as the helm guides the ship, even so the left foot must guide the body, always bearing thy full belly towards thy enemy, I mean the one shoulder so near as the other, for if thou wreath thy body in turning one side near to thy enemy than the other, thou do not stand in thy strength, nor so ready to perform an answer, as when thy whole body lies towards thy enemy.

The manners of a passage.

A passage is to be made advisedly with a nimble activity and celerity of the body, for he which will go in with a passage and escape, or clear away withal, the which is very hardly to be done if thy enemy is skillful, and therefore in the performance thereof, thou must have great skill, much practice and good judgment, especially in observing the point of thy enemy's weapon, and likewise

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thou must not consume one iota of time in thy performance, for so soon as thou see thy enemy bear his point steady in any guard, whether it is high or low, as if he does bear his point aloft, then step in with thy left foot with a sudden jump, and clap thy dagger under his rapier crossways, and so bearing up his point over thy head, and at the very same instant that thou join with his rapier, then chop in with thy rapier point withal to offend him, but thou must consume no time in staying any space betwixt thy defense and offense, for thou must not make two times of that which may be done at one time, and again, it is thy greater advantage to do it quickly, if thy enemy does lie in a steady guard, but if he keeps the point of his rapier variable, then it is not to be done but with the greatest danger of all.

The second opportunity to pass upon your enemy you have, if your enemy does carry the point of his rapier so low as your girdle stead, or thereabouts, then you must step in with your left foot, and with your dagger strike away the point of his rapier, and with the same let your rapier pass unto his body, as before said, I mean both at one time.

The third advantage is if your enemy does lie the point of his rapier near, or upon the ground, then step in with thy hindermost foot and cross your dagger overthwart his rapier, keeping his rapier down, so that he cannot raise his point before that you have hit him, and are recovered to your distance again,

The fourth way is you being both in your guard

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according to the first picture, or any other guard according to your practice, and then feign a thrust down to his knee, but presently raise your point again with a jump four feet sideways towards the left side of your enemy, and mount up your rapier hand withal, and put in your thrust over your enemy's dagger, into his dagger shoulder, and so with all possible speed recover your guard and distance again, by springing or jumping towards the left hand of your enemy, and so you fall away from the danger of his point: but in falling back again, your dagger must be prepared to defend a second, or a parting thrust, if your enemy should charge you therewithal immediately.

Yet there is another kind of passage, and that is an answer upon your enemy's proffer, if your enemy does offer a thrust at you, defend it with turning downward the point of your dagger, and at the very same instant slip in with your left foot, and put in your thrust into his body, for by stepping in with the left foot it goes in strongly, that it is hardly to be prevented.

Some that are ignorant will say that it is not possible to defend a passage, but I say there is no devise to hit a man neither with thrust nor blow, but there is a true defense to be shown by one that is skillful. but yet not every one that professes himself to be a fencer cannot teach true defense, but it must be such as have been grounded in the true art of defense by great practice, such a one it must be to teach defense.

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The danger of a passage is to be prevented three ways.

The first is by an active and nimble shift of the body by falling back with the right foot, and the danger being past to charge hastily upon your enemy again, but the best way is in lying in your guard according to the first picture, as your enemy comes in with his pass suddenly upon the first motion, fall your point, and in the very same time put him out withal, and with your dagger only defend his passage, if it is charged at your body, by turning the point downward, but if he puts it into your dagger shoulder in manner of an imbokata, then you must not let fall your dagger, except you leave your rapier to be a watchman for the defense of your shoulder or with bearing them both together it may be defense.

Another defense of a passage.

The single rapier alone, being carried according unto the rule of the single rapier, as hereafter shall be described when I come to that weapon, now if your enemy does take the point of your rapier, the which he may very well do by reason of the high carriage of him, if you are not careful to fall your point when you see him coming in, well if he does make seizure of your point, yet he cannot stay your rapier hand, but that you shall have two feet of your rapier and the hilts at your command for the defense of your body, which by swerving or beating him over your body, towards your left side, and a little turning your body by falling back

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with your foremost foot, this is a good defense for a passage: but indeed a man must have practice, and be as we call them a good scholar, that is such as are skillful; for a passage comes with such celerity, that one which is not used to it, cannot discern the coming of it, for there is no thrust so swift, nor so dangerous as the passage, but yet there is no thrust, nor blow nor passage, but by skill and cunning it is to be defended and avoided, for a man shall discern the coming of a passage so plain as a hawk, when she intends to fly at check, sitting upon the perch, a man may very easily perceive by the settling of herself to fly, indeed it is dangerous and deadly, except your mind is upon your business, for when you are at your play, you must expect a passage and false play as well as true play, or plain thrusts, for the hurt of the passage is most dangerous of all and most mortal, for with a passage a man cannot say I will hurt my enemy but a little, as you may with any other thrust, being put in at the length, I mean observing a true distance, for he that otherwise breaks distance may be as soon hit himself, as he hits another; therefore the passage is seldom or never used in fight, although they both are never so skillful in putting forth a passage, or if one can pass, and the other cannot, but he that can pass will be doubtful lest, the other will entrap him in his own assault, for why may not thy enemy be as skillful as thy self, once if he meets thee in the field, he shows himself valorous therein, and if it is thy fortune to hurt him by want of skill in a manner amongst men, he is reported to be as good a man as thy self, in regard

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he adventured himself with that small skill he had, and then in respect of an honest mind, ought to show him some favor, if he is not too forward, whereby he is like to endanger thee, but yet rather hurt, than be hurt, and rather kill, than be killed, if there is no remedy.

False play at rapier and dagger.

You must proffer, or feign a thrust a foot above your enemy's head, but presently pluck back your hand again, and put home your thrust which you mean to hurt your enemy withal under his dagger arm, either unto his body or thigh, as you will yourself, but step not forth with your foot when you feign a thrust, but with the second thrust which you mean to speed your enemy withal, let then your foot and hand go together, for in feigning it over his head, it will seem to him that you mean to hit him in the face, so that suddenly he will lift up his dagger, thinking to save his face, but he cannot put him down so quickly again but that you may hit him as aforesaid: again if you proffer or feign a thrust to your enemy's knee, I mean more quick than I can speak it, thrust it into his dagger shoulder, or to his face whether you list, for you shall find them both unguarded, for when he puts down his dagger to defend the feigned thrust, he cannot lift him up again before you have hit him as before said, if his dagger arm were never so strong, nor never so ready, he must put down his dagger and so he will, or else you may hit him in the breast, for no man can tell whether the feigned thrust will

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come home or not, but he which does thrust it, if the defense were never so skillful, but now the only way to defend a false thrust, is with the single rapier, for when that the dagger falls to clear the feigned thrust from the body, then the rapier must save the upper part, I mean the face and shoulder, by bearing him over your body as you do at the single rapier, and so by that means the rapier will defend all the body so low as your knee. By false play a rapier and dagger may encounter against a sword and buckler, so that the rapier man is provident and careful of making of his assault, that he thrusts not his rapier into the other's buckler: but the false play to deceive the buckler, is by offering a feigned thrust at the face of him that has the buckler, and then presently put it home to his knee or thigh, as you see occasion; for he will put up his buckler to save his face, but cannot put him down again before you have hit him, as aforesaid.

Likewise you may proffer or feign a thrust to the knee of the buckler man, and put it home to his buckler shoulder, or face, for if he lets fall his buckler to save below, he cannot put him up time enough to defend the upper parts of his body with his buckler, but must trust for his defense, to his single sword: wherefore it behooves every man to be skillful in the backword. The best way to make a false thrust, is to strike it down by the outside of your enemy's rapier hand, but not to thrust it home, and so presently bring up the point of your rapier, and thrust it home to his left shoulder; for if you thrust the feigned thrust within the compass of his dagger, then it may be he will hit the point of your rapier, in offering

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to break the feigned thrust; and if he does but touch your rapier in your first proffer, then you cannot recover your point to put home your second thrust, before he has recovered his guard, and so will prevent you: therefore, if you do make a false thrust, present it without the circle or compass of his dagger, that in his defense he may miss the hitting of your point, then has he but the single rapier to defend your second thrust, and he must make his preparation first beforehand with his rapier, if such an occasion is offered, otherwise it cannot be defended.

Now there are diverse other guards to be used at the rapier and dagger, but most of them will ask a great deal more practice, to be perfect in, than this first guard, and yet not any one of them more severe for defense both of blow and thrust than this first guard is, and therefore I do account it the master guard of all others, yet in a school, to make change of your play, then the more guards the more commendable, so they are performed with discretion and judgment: therefore I have described those which I think necessary, although not so at large, as hereafter you shall have them in a second book; for at some times, and for some purposes, one guard may better serve than another: for change of guards may cross some men's play, whereas if you use but one guard, may in often play be worn threadbare, therefore learn as many fashions of lying with thy weapons as thou can, and then in thy often practice make trial which thou do fit best withal, and that repose thy self upon at thy most need: for I have known many that could well defend themselves at one guard better than

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at another, although he is a cunning teacher, yet he cannot make all his scholars frame themselves unto true defense, all using one guard, wherefore there must be trial made; for if the scholar is dull of conceit in one guard, yet it may be he will fit better unto another, so those which I have found by my trial and practice, to be guards of defense, I put them down briefly as follows, but I think it were as good left them undone, as begun and not end them, yet thou shall have a taste, for by a taste men shall see what wine is in the butte.

The cross guard.

Carry the point of your dagger upright, and the hilt as low as your girdle stead without putting your thumb against the blade of your dagger, but gripping him fast in your hand, and the point of your rapier under your dagger hand according to the picture.⁴²

Lying thus in your guard, your belly or breast will seem to be open or unguarded, so that he will make no doubt but to speed you in his first assault; but he charging you with a thrust, for your defense, if it is above the girdle stead, then carry your dagger steady over your body, keeping the point upright and bear him towards your right side, but in your defense, do not turn the point of your dagger downwards, but presently bring him into his right place again, and then upon his offer or making of play, if he charges you above the girdle stead, then defend it with dagger, and presently step in with your left foot, and thrust withal unto what

⁴² Presumably, he means the earlier image of the true guard above, although this image does not match his description, and could be an indication that Swetnam intended his book to include more images than it got.

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part of his body you list, but if he charges you under the girdle stead, then defend it with your rapier, striking it downward; now you must make yourself ready to take your time of advantage in your answering: I mean in the very motion of your enemy's assault, defend and offend both with one time: if you both lie upon this guard, looking who shall make play first, then make you a short thrust, but presently clap into your guard again, and so you shall draw him to make play, and yet be firm and ready in your guard to take your greater advantage, which must be done upon your enemy's charge; for when he has charged you with his thrust, and you defended yourself, as before said, then step in with your left foot to answer his assault, presently upon your defense. Now if your enemy lies in this guard, and will not make play, then the best advantage which you have of your enemy, is charging him (in a manner) as it were with a wrist or a dropping blow to his face, breast, or knee, putting it in slope wise, by turning your knuckles inward, and when it is lighted on the place which you determine to hit; then thrust it home withal, and this thrust being put in slope wise, is the best thrust to hit him which lies in the cross guard, and the defender must be ready and nimble with his dagger for his defense; or otherwise to be prevented: but for a stroke, or a fore-right plain thrust, it is with more ease defended by him which has the perfectness of his guard, than it is by lying in any other guard.

Now if your enemy does lie on this cross guard, you may proffer a feigned thrust at his breast, and presently put it into his dagger shoulder on the outside

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of his dagger arm: this false thrust may be defended with a quick bringing back of the dagger again: but then the defender must not overcarry his dagger to defend the false thrust, yet he must carry him against every offer.

Another defense belonging to this guard is lying in this cross guard, if your enemy charges you under the girdle stead with a thrust, strike it by with your rapier, by letting fall your rapier point towards the ground; but if it comes above, then defend it with your dagger, as before, but do not carry your dagger above half a foot; for if you overcarry your dagger, you may be endangered by the the false play. Again, if you make the first proffer, and your enemy lying in this guard, then, so soon as you have made your thrust at him, presently let fall the point of your rapier to the groundward, lifting up your rapier hand, and defend his answer with your rapier, by striking it outward, I mean towards your right hand, so that his thrust may go clear on your right side, for your dagger will not defend your enemy's answer so well as your rapier, especially upon this guard.

Many have had a good opinion of the stokata guard, but (in my mind) it is more wearisome unto the body, and not so defensive for the body, as the first guard following the first picture; my reasons are these, the hilt and rapier hand being borne so far back behind the body, it cannot defend a blow, for the blow will light before you can bear out your rapier to bear the blow backword-way, as it should be done, neither can the rapier defend a false thrust, and a false thrust must be defended with the rapier only: Also

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the point of the rapier being borne so low as this guard restrains them, the face and breast lie open, or else unto a single defense which is not sure; therefore keep two strings to thy bow, it is safe riding at two anchors a head, but if a man were put to an extremity, then it were better to have half a loaf than no bread, better to defend it single, than to take it on the skin, and so I will with words describe this guard, and some other.

The stokata guard.

You must (if you will frame yourself into this guard) keep the dagger point outright, and so high as your cheek, and your rapier hand so far back, and something low as you can, and your feet three feet distance at the least, and this guard many professors do teach as the chief and master guard of all other; Now the reasons which they show to draw men into this guard, is first say they, the head bowing back, then the face is furthest from danger of a thrust or blow: now to answer this again, I say, that although the face is something further from the enemy, yet the bottom of the belly, and the foreleg is in such danger, that it cannot be defended from one that is skillful; and to be hurt in the belly is more dangerous than the face, whereas if thou frame thy guard according unto my direction following the first picture, then shall thou find that thy belly is two feet (at the least) further from danger of a thrust, and so is the foot likewise, and the leg safe and out of danger both of blow and thrust: and now thy face will seem to be, and is the nearest part towards

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thine enemy, but then thou have thy dagger being in his right place, nearest unto thy face, ready to defend him: again, he which stands abroad with his feet, will always be in jealousy of his foreleg, the which must be defended by plucking him up nimbly at every blow and thrust, and yet that will not surely defend him from a thrust, but admit you do defend the leg by plucking him up, then do you lose your time of answering your enemy, which should be done in the same time which you pluck up your leg, and before you can come in again with your answer, your enemy will have recovered his guard and distance again: There are many other guards, some of them I will touch little, and some of them I will leave until another time: there are three high guards, one of them I will speak next of, because it is a great enemy, not only unto the stokata guard, but it likewise crosses all other guards, and it follows in this manner.

Keep your thumb long ways upon the blade of your rapier, according unto the natural art; the common holding of the vulgar sort, and your feet so close together, as you can, and the hilt of your rapier so high as your cheek, bowing the elbow joint of your rapier arm, and your dagger hilt so low as your girdle stead, and bear the point of your dagger upright, and the rapier point on the inside of your dagger, both close together, looking under your rapier, and bear out your dagger at the arm's end, without bowing your elbow joint, and if your enemy charges you with a thrust, carry the thrust with your dagger toward the right side, keeping the point of your dagger upright, not turning

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him in your defense this way nor that way, but bear him steady over your body, and so you may defend any manner of thrust: for if you bear your dagger (as aforesaid) your enemy's point will pass clear under your rapier arm, but having once defended, in the very same motion you must lift up the hilt of your rapier, and turning your knuckle upward, and withal, turn your point down into your enemy's rapier shoulder, stepping forth with the right foot and hand together, your defense and offense must be all done with one motion. Now if your enemy charges you with a blow, you are as ready to defend it double on this guard as in any other: but if thou charge thine enemy, or make the first assault, prepare thy defense for the rapier shoulder, by carrying thy dagger over thy body, keeping the point of thy dagger upright. This defense is good to be used against a left handed man likewise.

Now he which is well experimented in this guard he will find it very dangerous for offense to thine enemy, and defensive for thy self, above all other guards, especially if thou have discretion to lie at watch discretely, and to take thine opportunity and advantage, when thine enemy proffers any kind of play upon thee.

The careless or the lazy guard.

Lay the point of your rapier upon the ground a foot wide of your left side overthwart your body, and let the hilt of your rapier rest upon your

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right thigh, and your dagger under your rapier about a foot forward of the hilt, and so leaving your whole belly or breast, will seem a very fair bait for your enemy to thrust at, but when he charges you with a thrust, your defense must be by the lifting up of your rapier point, with your dagger, throwing him over towards your right side, but lift not up your rapier hand in the time of your defense in any case, for so it may endanger the face, but so soon as you have turned it clear over your body with both your weapons as aforesaid (it may be done with one of them, but not so well because not so sure as with both together) then upon your defense recover your point hastily again and chop him in with an overhand thrust, turning your knuckles upwards into his right shoulder where you may easily hit him if you are quick in taking your time before he recovers his distance, or gets out of your reach. This is no painful guard, but very easy and quickly learned, and it is a very sure guard to defend any manner of thrust, now upon this guard if your enemy does falsify a thrust upon you by offering it at breast or face, whereby to make you lift up your weapons, thinking to hit you beneath with a second thrust by reason of your lifting them up to save the other parts the which you must do, but failing of it above, bring down your dagger quickly again to defend below the second thrust.

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The forehand guard at rapier and dagger.

Put thy rapier hand under the hilt of thy dagger, always keeping the point of thy rapier something variable, and yet something directly about the girdle stead of thy enemy, and the point of thy dagger in a manner upright, or a very little leaning towards thy left side, and both thy dagger and thy rapier hilts together, and both so low as thy girdle stead: those being guarded, if thy enemy does charge thee with a thrust, carry thy dagger quick over towards thy right side, and make a present answer by chopping out the point of thy rapier, and so hastily into thy guard again, expecting a fresh charge.

The broad ward.

Bear out both your arms right out from your body stiff at the arm's end, and a foot at the least asunder, and turn both the rapier and dagger hilts so high as your breast or higher, leaving all your body open, or unguarded to seem to, and when your enemy does charge you with a thrust, strike it with your dagger towards your right side, and withal answer him again with an overhand thrust unto his dagger shoulder, but you must keep your thumb upon the blade of your rapier, so then shall you put in your thrust the more steadier, and the more stronger.

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The names of the chiefest thrusts, which are used at rapier and dagger, with the manner how to perform them.

A right stock, or stockata, is to be put in upwards with strength and quickness of the body, and the guard for the putting in a stock is leaning so far back with your face and body as you can, and the hilt of your rapier so near the ground, or so low as you can, but of this guard I have spoken sufficiently already.

A slope stock is to be made unto your enemy's breast, or unto his rapier shoulder, if he does look over his rapier, but in putting it in, you must wheel about your rapier hand, towards your left side, turning your knuckles inward, this thrust being put in slopewise as aforesaid, will hit thy enemy which lies upon the cross guard, or the careless guard, or the broad ward, when a right stock or plain fore right thrust will not hit.

An imbokata, is a falsifying thrust, first to proffer it towards the ground, so low as your enemy's knee, and then presently put it home unto your enemy's dagger shoulder, or unto any part of his dagger arm, for he will put down his dagger to defend your feigned thrust, but cannot recover his dagger again before you have hit him in the dagger arm, shoulders or face, whether you will yourself, for in proffering this thrust, there is no way to defend the upper part, the dagger being once down, but only with the single rapier, and except a man does expect it, it cannot be so defended neither.

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Another thrust called a reverse.

A reverse is to be made, when your enemy by gathering in upon you, causes you to fall back with your right foot, and then your left foot being foremost, keeping up your dagger to defend, and having once broken your enemy's thrust with your dagger, presently come in again with your right foot, and hand together, and so put in your reverse unto what part you please, for it will come with such force that it is hard to be prevented.

A thrust called a mountanto.

The mountanto is to be put in with a good celerity of the body and in this manner, you must frame your guard when you intend to charge your enemy with this thrust, bear your rapier hard upon, or so near the ground as you can, lying very low with your body, bowing your left knee very near the ground also, and either upon your enemy's thrust or in lying in his guard you may strike his rapier point toward your right side with your dagger so that it may pass clear under your rapier arm, and with same motion as you strike his rapier, suddenly mount up your rapier hand higher than your head, turning your knuckles upward, but turn the point of your rapier downwards over his rapier arm into his breast or shoulder, and you must be quick in the performance of this thrust, and likewise nimbly you must leap out again. This thrust must be put in by the stepping forward of your left leg: now if you use this thrust more than once, your

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enemy will expect your coming aloft with him as you did before, but then put it in the second or third time underneath, and you shall hit him about the girdle stead, and so because at this time I will not be over tedious I leave to speak of many other thrusts.

The best way for the holding of a dagger, either to break blow or thrust, and four ways bad as follows.

First, if you hold your dagger too high, you may be hit under the dagger arm.

Secondly, and if too low, you may be hit over the dagger arm, either in the arm, shoulder or face.

Thirdly, and if you bear your dagger too much towards your rapier shoulder, then you may be hurt on the outside of the arm by bearing narrow, for so we call the carriage of him, being born in this manner before spoken of.

Fourthly, if too wide from your body you may be hurt on the inside of the arm, face or breast: if the dagger elbow joint is crooked, then there is small force in the dagger arm for the defense of blow, or thrust, but the dagger being born out stiff at the arm's end, defends a blow strongly, as you shall hear by and by.

Four ways not to break a thrust.

First, if you break a thrust downwards, it may hit you in the bottom of the belly.

Secondly, if you break him upwards it may

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endanger you in the face.

Thirdly, and if you break your enemy's thrust towards your rapier side, it may hit you in the rapier arm.

Fourthly, or in breaking a thrust, if you let the weight of your dagger carry your dagger arm back behind you, then your enemy may with a double thrust hit you before you can recover up your dagger in his place again.

A good way to defend a thrust or a blow.

The best holding of a dagger is right out at the arm's end, and the hilt even from your left cheek, and the point compassing your body, I mean bowing towards your rapier shoulder, and when you break a thrust, turn but only your hand wrist about, letting fall the point of your dagger downward, but keep out your dagger arm so stiff as you can, so shall you be ready to defend twenty thrusts one after another, if they come never so thick, and likewise you are as ready for a blow; whereas if you fall your arm when you break your thrust, your enemy may hit you with a second thrust before you can recover your dagger in his place to defend it, for a thrust goes more swifter than an arrow shot out of a bow, wherefore a man cannot be too ready, nor too sure in his guard; now both for defense and offense of every blow and thrust, thou must turn thy knuckles upward, or downward, inward or outward, always turning your hand according to the nature of the guard, that you frame yourself unto, or according as when you see your enemy's

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guard, then you must determine before you charge your enemy either with blow, or thrust, in what manner to turn your hand in your offense or defense, sometimes after one manner, and sometimes after another, as both before and hereafter shall be sufficiently satisfied more at large.

The true guard for the single rapier.

Keep your rapier point something sloping towards your left shoulder, and your rapier hand so low, as your girdle stead, or lower, and bear out your rapier hand right at arm's end, so far as you can, and keep the point of your rapier something leaning outwards toward your enemy, keeping your rapier always on the outside of your enemy's rapier, but not joining with him, for you must observe a true distance at all weapons, that is to say, three feet betwixt the points of your weapons, and twelve feet distance with your forefoot from your enemy's forefoot, you must be careful that you frame your guard right, now you must not bear the rapier hand wide of the right side of your body, but right forward from your girdle stead, as before said.



The reasons of this guard.

In keeping your point something sloping or compassing your face, your enemy cannot offend you with a wrist blow, which if you keep your point directly upright, you may very easily be hit in the face.

Being guarded as before said, if your enemy discharges a thrust at you, carry your rapier hand over your body towards your left side, keeping your point directly in his place until you have defended your enemy's assault, then presently after let fall the point of your rapier, turning your knuckles inwards, and discharge your thrust at your enemy's thigh, or body, as you see occasion.

There are likewise many other guards to be framed

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at single rapier, as that one of the short sword is a good guard at some times, and for some purposes, if a man is perfect in it, by skill and practice aforehand, as hereafter you shall see the manner thereof more at large, when I come to that weapon.

Now another fashion is, by holding your left hand upon the blade, and so with the strength of your forefinger and thumb of your left hand, you may break your enemy's thrust clear off your body, by turning of your rapier point downward or upward accordingly as your enemy charges you; and then charge your enemy again with a quick answer.

Now another is, by standing upon the stock, ready to chop in upon your enemy's assault, but you must turn in your left shoulder to your enemy nearer than the right, only to be as it were a bait unto him, but when he does thrust at you, wheel about your body, falling back with your left foot; but withal, thrust out your rapier, and so you may hit, and defend, only with the shift of the body, and you shall find that the oppressor will come upon his own death, by proffering at that shoulder, which you make show to be open unto him: but you must not offer to defend it with your rapier, but only trust unto the shift of your body.

False play at the single rapier.

If your enemy does lie in this guard, according to this picture, then proffer or feign a thrust unto his left side, but presently pluck back your hand, and thrust it home unto his right arm shoulder or face, for he will carry his rapier over his body, to defend

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the feigned thrust, but can hardly bring him back again to save your second or determined thrust, except he is very skillful, active, or nimble: now if he does not bear his rapier to defend the feigned thrust when you proffer it, then you may hit him with a plain thrust the second time, if you put it home without falsing it at all.

Another deceit.

Likewise, you may proffer or feign a thrust two feet wide of your enemy on his right side, and presently thrust it home to his breast, for he will bear his rapier beyond the compass of true defense, by reason it will seem unto a cunning player that your intention is to hit him on the outside of the rapier arm, so that when he thinks to strike your point from offending his arm, by that means he will open his body, although he opens himself but a little, yet with your second thrust you may hit him as aforesaid.

The defense of this false play.

You must be very careful that you do not overcarry your rapier in the defense of any manner of thrust, yet you must carry him a little against every proffer which your enemy does make: for if a man is very skillful, yet is he not certain when his enemy does charge his point upon him, and proffer a thrust, whether that thrust will come home, or no: wherefore (as I said) you must bear your rapier against every thrust to defend it, but bear him but

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half a foot towards the left side, for that will clear the body from danger of his thrust, and so quick back again in his place, whereby to meet his weapon on the other side, if he charges you with a second thrust, thinking to deceive you as aforesaid.

A slip at single rapier.

Now if your enemy does charge you with a blow, when as you see the blow coming, pluck in your rapier, and let the blow slip, and then answer him again with a thrust, but be careful to pluck in your rapier to that cheek which he charges you at, so that if the blow does reach home, you may defend him according unto the rule of the backsword.

The defense of this slip is to forebear striking at all, but if you do strike, not to overstrike your sword, but so strike your blow as you may recover him into his place hastily again; for in fight if you do strike, you must forebear strong blows, for with a strong blow, you may fall into diverse hazards; therefore strike an easy blow, and do it quick, but to thrust, and not strike at all, is to thy best advantage.

Another slip.

Put your thumb longways, or forward upon the handle of your rapier according unto the natural fashion, and your enemy lying in this guard, join your rapier according as the picture, and so soon as you have joined, turn the heel of your

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hand upward, and your point downward, and so bring your point, compassing under your enemy's right elbow; and then with the strength of the thumb, turn it into his breast: the like you may do if your enemy offers to close with you at single rapier, for if he comes hastily upon you, you cannot draw out your point whereby to offend him, but by turning it in as before said, you may hit the skillfulest man that is in his coming in: Now if he does defend your point below, you may by a sudden turning up your point, thrust it home to his right shoulder or face, whether you will yourself.

The defense of this slip.

If your enemy does join his weapon with yours, to close or to turn in a slip, then make yourself ready quickly, by putting your thumb upon your rapier, as aforesaid, when he falls his point towards his left hand, to fetch the compass of your rapier arm; then fall your point the contrary way, I mean towards your left hand, so shall you meet with his weapon below again, and this will defend yourself, and when he raises his point again, then do you raise yours likewise into his place again.

Another slip.

If your enemy does join his rapier with yours, and does bear him strongly against you, thinking to overbear you by strength of arm, then so soon as he begins to charge you strongly, bear your rapier a little against him, and then suddenly let fall

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your point so low, as your girdle stead, and thrust it home withal, and so you may hit him, for by letting his rapier go away suddenly, he sways away beyond the compass of defense, so that you may hit him, and fall away again before he can recover his rapier to endanger you.

A dazzling thrust at single rapier or backsword.

Proffer or feign a thrust at the fairest part of your enemy's body which lies most unguarded, and then more quicker than I can speak it, thrust it in on the other side, and so changing three or four times, and then chop it home suddenly, and you shall find his body unguarded, by reason that he will carry his rapier or sword this way or that way, thinking to defend the false thrust, because he supposes them to be true thrusts: for there is no man so cunning, that knows if a thrust is proffered within distance, but that it may hit him, or whether it will be a false thrust, or no, the defender knows not, and therefore he must prepare his defense against every thrust, that is proffered.

A close at single rapier or at backsword.

First, charge your enemy with a thrust aloft with an overhand thrust, directly at your enemy's face, and withal follow it in close, bearing your enemy's point over your head, by the carrying up of your rapier hand, and then may you make seizure on the hilt of your enemy's rapier or sword, or on his hand-wrist with your left hand, and then having made seizure of his weapon, you may then use

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what execution you will, I mean either blow or thrust, or trip up his heels.



The guard for backsword.

Carry your sword hilt out at the arm's end, and your point leaning or sloping towards your left shoulder, but not joining with your enemy's weapon, as this picture seems, but so long as you lie in your guard, let there be three feet distance betwixt your weapons, but if your enemy does charge you, either with blow or thrust, carry your sword over your body against your enemy's assault, and so cross with him according to the picture, bear also your point steady over your body, something sloping towards your left shoulder; I mean the point must go so far as the hilt, but not turning your point the contrary way, but carry both together.

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I will make it plainer by and by, because I would have thee to understand it wisely, for having with a true defense defended your enemy's blow or thrust by crossing with him, or by bearing your weapon against his assault (as before said) the danger being past, then presently at the same instant, and with one motion turn down the point of your sword, turning your knuckles inward, and so thrusting it home to your enemy's thigh, but withal, step forth with your foot and hand together.

But there is a great observation to be had in your practice concerning the true carriage of your point, for in your defense if you do not carry your sword true, then it is hard to defend either blow or thrust; for if you carry the hilt of your sword against either blow or thrust, and do not carry the point withal level, even as you lay in your guard according to the picture; then your hand and face are endangered, but bearing the hilt and the point about a foot over your body towards your left side; and likewise to bear your sword stiff out at the arm's end, without bowing of your elbow joint: provided always, that your sword being in your right hand, you must look with both your eyes on the inside of your sword, for then you have but one kind of defense, so that the point of your sword is sloping toward the left shoulder: but otherwise, if you keep the point of your sword upright, then your enemy has three ways to endanger you, especially, if you carry your sword right before the midst of your belly, with the point upright, as I have known some hold an opinion of that way to be good, but I say, he that trusts to that guard, may be hit in the head with a sudden wrist blow,

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if his practice were never so good: and likewise both his arms are unguarded, and to be dangered, either with blow or thrust; but if you guard yourself after my direction, then your enemy has but only the left side of your head, and your legs open, and they are easy to be defended; the leg, by plucking him up, the which you must do upon every blow, which your enemy charges you withal, and with the same defend the head and body, carrying your sword over your body towards your left side, the point and hilt both steady, as I have before said.

Now although I here speak altogether of a backsword, it is not so meant, but the guard is so called: and therefore, whether you are weaponed with a two edged sword, or with a rapier, yet frame your guard in this manner and form, as before said.

*Another very sure and dangerous guard at the backsword,
called the unicorn guard, or the forehead guard.*

Bear the sword hilt so high as your face, keeping him out at the arm's end, without bowing of your elbow joint, and always keep your point directly upon your enemy's face, and your knuckles of your sword hand upward; but if your enemy does charge you with a blow to the right side of your head, then turn but your sword hilt, and your knuckles outward, still keeping your sword arm stiff in his place, turning but only your wrist and your hand: this is a very dangerous guard to your

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enemy, being carried with a strong arm, for by reason that you keep him out at the point's end, being so directly in his face, that he cannot come near you without great danger, either of blow or thrust, but indeed if your sword is not carried out with a strong arm, then your enemy may endanger your head by striking of two blows together, the one being struck at the point of your sword to strike him down and the other to your head but they must be struck both together very suddenly, or else there is small danger in them, now if you are wary in watching when he makes his first blow, suddenly pluck in the point of your sword to you, and so by that slip his first stroke he will overcarry him, so that if you turn an overhand blow to his head, you may hit him before he can recover his sword to strike his second blow, or defend himself lying in this long guard, you may slip every blow that is struck, pluck in your sword even as you see your enemy strike and turn it over to the right side of his head.

A close at backsword.

Lying in thy guard according unto the picture at single rapier, and when you mean to close, lift up the hilt of thy sword so high as thy cheek, and charge thy enemy with a thrust directly at his face, and with the same motion step in with thy hindmost foot, turning the knuckles of thy sword hand inward, and so bearing thy enemy's point over thy head, and then catch hold on thy enemy's sword hilt, or his hand-wrist, with thy left hand,

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but on his hilt is the surest to hold, and then you may either trip up his heels, or cut, or thrust him with your weapon, and in this manner you may close with a rapier also, if you can make your party good at the grip or close, for your enemy in bearing over his sword over his body to defend his face from your thrust, he thereby carries away his point, so that he cannot endanger you if you follow it in close and quick.

False play with the backsword.

Your enemy being in his guard, and lying at watch for advantage, you may feign a blow at the right side of his head, and presently with the turning of your hand-wrist, strike it home to his left side, which being done quick you may hit a reasonable good player, for he will bear his sword against the feigned blow, and by that means unguard his left side but at no hand you must not let the feigned blow touch your enemy's sword, but give your sword a sudden check and so strike it to the contrary side, for if your feigned blow does join with your enemy's sword, it will stay his sword within the compass of true defense, so that he will be ready to defend your false blow, but otherwise if you touch not his sword he will carry him beyond the true compass of defense, of the second blow, which you determine to hit him withal, so likewise you may feign your blow at the left side of your enemy's head, but presently strike it home to the right side of his head, in manner as aforesaid.

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Another false play.

Again, you may join your sword within your enemy's sword according unto the picture, but presently so soon as you have joined, strike it down to his leg, but nimbly recover your sword in his place again falling a little away withal, for so soon as you have discharged your blow, you may very easily before he can endanger you recover your guard and distance: likewise you may give a back blow unto the right side of his head, and presently withal, fall down again with another blow unto the inside of his leg, stepping home with your second blow, for when you have made your first blow as aforesaid, it may be your enemy will wink, and so you may hit his leg before his eyes open again, so that you do it quick, but if he does not wink, yet a good player will think that when he has defended your first blow aloft, he will not expect a blow so suddenly as this ought to be struck, and therefore may be hit with a second blow, yea although he looks well to himself, and the rather that many do not allow in their teaching a backsword blow to be struck at the leg, but I say a man may give a square, or forehand blow to the inside of his enemy's leg, and very well recover up your sword again before your enemy can endanger you.

Another deceit.

Standing in your guard, and your enemy charging you with a blow, pluck in your sword suddenly, and let his blow slip, and so soon as his blow

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is past, answer him again, either with blow or thrust whether you will, but if it is at blunt with a blow, put in right with a thrust, or by plucking in your sword, and always have a care you pluck him in unto that side of the head which he charges you at, for in so doing, if his weapon's point does reach home, yet you are at a guard of defense, but with this skill and a little withdrawing your body withal, his weapon will pass clear, for the force of his blow will oversway his weapon, and he will so overcarry his body, that in a manner his back will be towards you, so that with a quick answer you may but [sic] him at your pleasure or close with him if you think you can make your party good at the grip; likewise you may close upon the cross, by joining weapon to weapon, but when you have made your close in your first encounter, take hold on your enemy's hand-wrist, or else on the hilt of your enemy's weapon, for then he cannot well offend you being but single weaponed. But to try your manhood, at the length of your weapon, I hold it the best fight and less danger to both, for there is no more certain defense in a close, than is in a passage, for thy are both very dangerous.

Another deceit.

Your enemy lying in guard, you may strike a back blow unto his right ear, although it lights upon his sword, that is all one, for in striking it above, it may cause him to wink, or he will think you have done, but so soon as you have delivered your blow above, then presently, I mean more quicker

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than I can speak it, strike it down into the inside of his right leg, or if you do but touch his sword in joining him close as the picture stands, and so soon as you have but touched his backsword on the outside, strike it down unto the inside of the leg presently, yet always have a care to recover your sword into his place again for your own defense, the which you may easily do, yea although you encounter with a very skillful man, but if you strike a plain blow at the leg without proffering it above first, as is before said, then you endanger your own head, but in presenting it above, you busy him to defend the first feigned blow, so that he cannot be readily prepared to charge you with any blow of danger before you have recovered your guard, the which you may well do, although he answers you never so quick.

Another very cunning deceit with the backsword.

Strike a blow to the inside of the right leg, or foot of thy enemy, but draw it to thee, striking it something short, and then presently strike it home again to the left ear of a right-handed man, but it must be done more quicker than I can speak it, and thou shall find his left ear unguarded, for he will look for it at the right side, and it were not amiss to strike it once or twice from the leg to the right ear first, for then he will look for the same blow again, but yet I would not have you make all your play at the leg, but sometimes to offer a blow at the one side of the head, and then to the other, so by making

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often change of your blow, is the best way to deceive thy enemy.

A very dangerous blow at backword.

Thy enemy lying in this guard, suddenly pluck in the pommel of thy sword to thy breast, and withal turn thy knuckles inward, and then presently proffer a thrust towards thy enemy's breast, but turn it over with a blow to his right ear, with the which blow thou may hit a good player, if he is not aware of it beforehand, for he must bear his sword against the thrust for the defense thereof, now if he does overcarry him never so little further than he ought to do for his true defense, then he cannot bring him back time enough to defend the blow before you have hit him, as before said.

This blow is also good for a left-handed man, or against a left-handed man.

If you would hit a left-handed man with this blow, then present your thrust full at his face by a sudden lifting up the hilt of your sword so high as your head, and withal you must now turn your knuckles outward, and so soon as you have presented your thrust, presently strike it home unto the left side of his head.

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A false thrust to be used in fight at backsword.

Proffer your thrust two or three feet wide of thy enemy's left ear, and withal let fall thy point so low as thy enemy's girdle stead or lower, and then presently with the same motion, raise thy point on the other side of thy enemy's sword, and chop it home unto his right arm, shoulder or face whether you will yourself, for in bearing his sword over his body to defend the feigned thrust, he cannot well recover him back again to defend your second thrust before you have hit him, as before said, except he has by much practice been used to that false thrust beforehand.

Another dangerous blow.

Thy enemy lying in his guard, strike a blow to the inside of his right leg, and presently with as much speed as possible thou can strike it home unto his left cheek, for he will bear over his sword to defend the first proffer, and so withdraw himself into his guard, so that he will be unprovided for the defense of his left side, if he struck in with a quick hand. All manner of false blows, slips and thrusts at what weapon soever, are to be avoided and defended with the true carriage of thy weapon, as at rapier and dagger, if a false thrust is made below, and with the rapier above. And if either blow or thrust are falsified at the backsword, or at sword and dagger, thou must bear thy sword against every proffer,

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but be sure thou do not overcarry him, but that thou may be quick back again, to meet his second blow on the other side, as bringing thy weapon into his place by practice, thou shall find thy self surely guarded as in some places in this book thou shall find the defense.

After the false play at every weapon, although I have not set down the defense of every slip, nor of every fault, which had been very necessary: for as every lesson on a fiddle has a several tune, even so every guard and every falsify has a several kind of offense, and defense, but here thou shall find the defense that belongs unto many of them, and the rest I left out for want of leisure to write them, but they shall follow in the next impression.

The true guard for the staff, which we will call the low guard.

Keep the point of your staff right in your enemy's face, holding one hand at the very butt end of the staff, and the other a foot and a half distant, looking over your staff with both your eyes and your feet a foot and a half distance, or thereabouts, according to this picture, always standing cross with your enemy, I mean, if his right hand and foot are foremost, let yours be so likewise, and if his left hand and foot are foremost, then make you your change and cross with him also.



Now, if your enemy does charge you, either with blow or thrust, you lying in the guard, as above shown, then your defense is thus: and if he charges you above the girdle stead, either with blow or thrust, strike yourself against it, keeping up the point of your staff, so high as your head; but so soon as you have defended, whether it is blow or thrust, presently answer your enemy again with a thrust, and then hastily recover your guard again, and in giving of a thrust, you may let go your forehand from off your staff, but hold the butt end fast in one hand: and so soon as you have discharged your thrust, pluck back your staff, and clap both your hands on him again, and recover your guard; but yet stay not long, to see whether your enemy will begin with you, but begin with him first, with a false thrust,

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as anon you shall see the manner how to do it: and when you can do it, what need you to stand long about that which may be done presently, and without danger?

Now if he proffers either blow or thrust unto your lower parts under your girdle stead, if it is a thrust, strike it away, by turning the point of your staff towards the ground, but be sure to strike it with that large compass, that the point of your staff may pitch, not in the ground, for so you may deceive yourself in your defense, if he charges you so low with a blow, then you may strike it as you do a thrust, or you may pitch the point of your staff into the ground two or three feet wide of that side which he charges you at, and you may in the pitching down of your staff, let go your forehand, that he does not hit him, and then all parts are defended so high as your head, so that you always have a care to keep your staff in his right place, that is to say, if your right hand and foot are foremost, then leave all your body open, so that your enemy cannot endanger you on the outside of your staff, but if he will hit you, he must needs strike or thrust in the inside of your staff, and then you must defend all blows or thrusts, by bearing your staff over your body towards the left side, for this we call the forehand defense, and this defense consumes no time: but if in holding your staff in the right hand, as before is said, and yet for your guard do bear your staff over towards the left hand, then you leave your right shoulder arm or face, open or unguarded, the which must be defended backward, but you may defend twenty thrusts or blows beforehand, better

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than one backward; for the back defense is nothing so ready, nor so certain, as the forehand defense is, and therefore keep and continue your guard, according unto the picture, for then if he proffers a thrust on the outside of your staff: you need not to fear nor offer to defend it, for there is no place in any danger, but all is guarded, especially from the girdle stead upward.

And in your defense, have always a care to the true carriage of your staff, that you do not carry him beyond the compass of true defense, for fear of the false play: for if you overcarry your staff, I mean further than need does require, you cannot recover him back again quick enough to defend the false. Now, if your enemy does assault you upon the contrary side, you must change both your foot and hand to cross with him, as before: but take heed when you change, you do not come in with your hinder foot, but let him stand firm and fall back with the foremost foot upon every change. And having defended your enemy's assault, with a little increasing in, answer him with a thrust, thrusting out your staff with your hindermost hand, and stepping forth withal, with your foremost foot, and in the same instant of your proffer, let go your forehand, but after your offense presently recover your hand upon your staff again: now if your staff is shorter than your enemy's, then (for your better advantage) step in with your hinder foot with your answer, but at no hand, never strike one blow with your staff, for he that does but lift up his staff to strike, may easily be hit by the defender with a thrust, for in the same motion that the oppressor does lift up his staff to

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strike the defender, may with a speedy thrust hit him in the breast, and hold him off upon the point of his staff, if the defender thrusts out his staff with his hinder hand, especially if their staves are both of one length, then he that strikes, cannot endanger the other with a blow, for he that strikes, holds both his hands upon his staff, until he has discharged his blow, whereas he that thrusts, has two feet odds of him in length that strikes, so that he puts out his staff, to his most advantage, as before said.

It is necessary, that he which uses the staff, should have use of both his hands alike, for thereby he may the better shift his staff from hand to hand, whereby to lie cross always with your enemy, changing your hand and foot, as he changes for lying the one with the right hand and foot foremost, and the other with the left, then he that strikes first, can not choose but endanger the other's hand, but if you cannot change your staff to lie cross with your enemy's staff: then for your defense of a blow, pitch the point of your staff into the ground, and let go your forehand, and when you have discharged the blow with as much speed as you can, answer his blow with a thrust, for the greatest secret of all most chiefly to be remembered at this weapon, is, if your enemy does but once offer to lift up his hand to strike, then presently chop in with a thrust at his breast, shoulder, or face, for so you may hit him as you will yourself, so that you take your time of answering.

If your enemy strikes with his staff, he holds him fast in both his hands when he delivers his blow, by reason thereof, he which thrusts and looses

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his forehand, when he discharges his thrust or draws in the forehand close unto the hinder hand which holds the butt end of his staff, and so thrusts him out withal, you may keep the striker upon the point of your staff, so that with his blow he cannot reach you, being equally matched in length, but must come upon his death, or danger himself greatly.

The high guard for the staff.

Look under your staff with both your eyes, with the point hanging slope-ways downwards by your side, bearing out your staff at the arm's end, higher than your head a little according to this picture.



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In looking under your staff it will seem to your enemy, that your defense is only for your head, then he will think to hit you in the body with a thrust, for the body seems to lie very open unto him, and if he does charge you with a thrust, carry the point of your staff over your body close by the ground towards the other side, and having defended the thrust, turn up the point of your staff presently towards your enemy's breast, and charge him with a thrust: again, if your enemy charges you with a blow at your head, lift up the point of your staff and meet the blow halfway, and withal, draw back your hands, for fear of endangering your fingers: having stricken away his staff, answer him again with a thrust (as before said:) Now if your enemy charges you with a blow at your side, either pitch the point of your staff into the ground to defend it, or else change into thy low guard and so cross with him; if your enemy does strike a full blow at your head, you need not fear neither of your hands, but by striking with your staff to meet his blow, you shall defend it upon the middle, or near the point of your staff, although he does strike purposely at your hand, yet can he not touch your hands nor any other part of your body: but upon the defense of your body draw back your hands. Now it behooves you to be perfect, not only in this guard, but also in changing your staff from hand to hand, according to your enemy's lying: to do well you should change, as he changes, sometimes the point of your staff should be hanging down by the right side of your body, and sometimes by the left, according to your enemy's lying, the best way to make your change, is to let your staff slip through your hands, like a weaver's

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shuttle, for this is a more speedy change than to shift him after the common manner, and by a little practice you may grow perfect in it.

The best guard for a dark night at staff.

If thou meet with thine enemy in the night, and he charges upon thee, the best means for thy defense, is presently to chop up into this high guard, except thy staff be of a sufficient length, to keep him off, with charging the point upon him, or else the third means is to trust to thy heels, but if thou will trust to thine hands, then either keep him off with thy point, or else above all parts, chiefly defend thy head, which is not to be done, but only by this guard, except a man may see the blow before it does light; now thou must put thy hands a little further asunder, than thou do for the day, that the blow may be defended, by taking him upon thy staff betwixt both thy hands: if it lights at your head, as it is the fashion of most men to strike at the head (as I have said before) rather than to any part of the body. Now having taken the blow betwixt your hands, withal, run in and close with him, for if you stand off at the length in fight, anytime, being in the night, it cannot choose but be very dangerous, if you suffer him to discharge many blows, but either answer him with a thrust, or else close with him, and turn the butt end of your staff into his breast or face, as you see occasion: now if it is in the day, or that you can see the blow before it lights; if your enemy charges you with a blow at the side, meet his blow by carrying it over to the other side, and pitch the point of your staff in the ground, and loose your foremost hand for dangering of your fingers, but hold the hinder

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hand fast at the butt end of your staff. But now, upon this high guard you cannot defend the false so well, nor so sure, as when you lie on the low guard; for if your enemy does proffer a thrust on the one side [of] your staff, and presently chops it home to the other side, he may endanger, nay, he may hit a skillful and cunning player, especially if you overcarry your staff in defense of the feigned blow or thrust.

Wherefore, if you lie on the low guard with your staff or pike, you shall defend a thrust with the point of your weapon long before it comes near you, and yet your point is ready to answer more speedily than it is when you lie on any other guard, but he which lies with his point of the staff or pike on the ground, has very little space to his body, no more than the length of his arm wherein he holds his weapon: therefore he which suffers a thrust to come so near, it will quickly come to the face or body, yet because most soldiers heretofore have used this fashion of lying, and are not experienced in the low guard, according to the first picture of the staff; but if in your practice you use both, you shall find the benefit thereof the better; now if you frame yourself into the high guard, your staff must not be, in length, above eight feet at the most, but rather shorter, for else in defending your enemy's thrust, a long staff will hit in the ground, and by that means, your enemy's thrust may endanger you: therefore, for this high guard, you must look that your staff is of that length, that you may carry the point clean from the ground in defending of a thrust, but for the low guard it is no matter of what length your staff is.

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**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS BETWIXT THE
MASTER AND SCHOLAR, CONCERNING THE STAFF**

The Scholar.

You have given me directions for two sorts of guards, which do you commend best that I may repose myself upon?

The Master.

I commend the low guard best, for that it serves with the quarterstaff of seven or eight feet, or for the long staff of twelve feet, and for the pike of eighteen feet, for I have made trial with men of good experience which have lain in other guards according to their practice, as some at quarterstaff will lay their point upon the ground overthwart their body, holding the butt end of their staff so low as their girdle stead: he that thus lies the best way to hit him is to proffer, or feign a thrust at his face, and presently put it home below, for he will carry his staff up to save his face, but cannot put him down again before you have hit him underneath as before said, but with quickness you may hit him in the face or breast, and never falsify your thrust but put it in suddenly, turning the heel of [sic] hinder hand upward withal: and if your enemy lies at half staff, holding him in the midst, his hands that so lie, are in danger of every blow that comes, but the best way to hit him that so lies without danger to thy self, is with a false thrust, and that is to

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proffer it on the one side of his staff, and to put it home on the other, according to the direction of the false play that follows: but first let me make an end of that which I have begun, and so we will proceed, some will lie with the long staff, or pike with the point on the ground, and the butt end so high as his head or higher; indeed this has been and is common fight with the pike amongst the soldiers, and the defense of this guard either for blow or thrust, is to swerve his upper hand, this way, or that way, according as he sees the danger of the oppressor's assault, and then presently launch out the staff or pike by lifting them up, upon the outside of their foot or else by gathering him up on their left arm, and so launch him out as aforesaid: he that uses this guard, must be strong, and very active, and nimble, but whatsoever he is, high or low, weak or strong, the low guard is best.

The Scholar.

If the low guard is so strong for my defense what need have I to learn any other?

The Master.

It is true, a man can be but sure if he practices all the days of his life, but it is not amiss for thee to know more than ever thou shall have occasion to use; for having the perfect use of the low and high guard, you may close with any staff man, if you think you can make your party good with him when you have closed.

The Scholar.

I pray you direct me the best manner of closing.

The Master.

When you encounter with any man that has a

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staff, a Welsh hook or a halberd, and yourself being armed with any one of these weapons, present a thrust to the face of your enemy, and withal, follow it in with your hindmost foot also; and as you encroach in, clap up your staff into the high guard, and you shall carry your enemy's point over your head by that means, but you must not be slack in following of it in, for he will bear the point of his weapon so high to defend his face, that he cannot recover his staff by no means to endanger you, and when you have made your close, you may turn the butt end of your staff in his face if you list, or you may trip up his heels, if you are cunning in wrestling: but if he has any short weapons about him, then I wish you to take him about the middle and unarm him of it, or else to hold him fast that he hurts you not, but if you are armed with a bill or a hook, then in your half close you may fall away turning the edge or your bill or hook towards his leg, and so by a drawing blow rake him over the shins, and keeping up the butt end of the staff for the defense of your own head, and so you may fall out of his distance, and recover your guard before he can any way endanger you.

If your enemy closes with you after this manner, and does offer the butt end of his staff unto your face or breast, then fall back with your forefoot, and make a quick change, and you shall have him at great advantage, both for defense and likewise to turn in the butt end of your staff unto his face or breast, and if you list this is a sure defense for such an assault, believe it, for I know it, he that is perfect in the low guard, may with a staff encounter against

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the Welsh hook, halberd, partisan, or glaive, and I hold that a staff with a pike to have odds against any such long weapon, being equally matched in length, for odds in length with any weapon is very much advantage, where I wish if any does appoint the field with any of these aforesaid weapons, it is not amiss for the one of them to condition to bring a hatchet or some other edged tool into the field to cut the longest staff, except you match them beforehand.

The Scholar.

I pray you let me hear your reason, so many think that the hook or any edged weapon has great odds against the staff.

The Master.

Indeed without cunning and skill, the Welsh hook, and these other weapons are more fearful unto the ignorant, but he that is cunning in the false play and slips, belonging unto the staff may with a false thrust or with slipping his blow endanger any other, being weaponed with any other of these weapons aforesaid. For if you falsify your thrust according to my direction in the false play, that is, to proffer your thrust on one side, and then to put home the second determined thrust unto the other side of his weapon, and then if your enemy has a hook, halberd, or bill in defending the false, the head of his weapon will so overcarry him by reason of the weight, that he cannot command him nimbly back again, whereby to defend the false, if your enemy is armed with a hook, halberd or partisan or glaive, if he charges you with a blow, then slip his blow, either by plucking

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in of your staff, keeping of the point upright until his blow is past, and then you may answer him again, either with blow or thrust, for by slipping a blow, the weight of the head of any of these aforesaid weapons will go with such a swing that it will turn his body in a manner round, I mean beyond the compass of defense.

Again if you think that your face is out of his reach, he which charges you with a blow with any of these aforesaid weapons, you may let fall the point of your staff, so that his blow may pass clear over your staff, and so chop home a thrust withal under your enemy's weapons, and then recover the point of your staff up hastily again.

The Scholar.

What if I am armed with any of these weapons aforesaid, what guard will you direct me to frame myself unto?

The Master.

I still commend the low guard for any long weapon, whether it is staff, pike, hook, halberd, partisan or glaive, my reason is the point being so high as your head, and the butt end so low as your thigh, then is your weapon more readier to defend either blow or thrust, if you are charged never so suddenly, whereas if your point hangs downwards toward the ground, you can never lift him up quick again to defend your thrust, but a blow may be defended easily, for that a blow comes more leasurably, for why it is fetched with a greater compass, and a thrust goes with far more celerity than a blow, being put in cunningly, but of these weapons shall follow more at large in the second book.

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Now if thy enemy has odds in length in his staff, then let thy enemy make the first assault, and upon defense of his assault step forth with thy hindermost foot, and so thou shall gain six feet at the least in reach, but if your staves are both of one length, then upon a charge or answer, increase in only with thy forefoot, and stand fast with thy hinder foot, only to pluck back thy body again, and if thou make the first assault, and thy enemy defends it, and so he makes a sudden answer, then it will be hard to recover up thy staff into his place, to defend it according to the low guard: but for a sudden shift the best defense is bearing your upper hand over your body, and letting your point fall to the ground, according to the old common order of the fight with the pike, at single hand, I mean, hand to hand, or I may say, man to man.

The Scholar.

I pray you how would you direct me to frame my guard with my staff, if I were to encounter with my enemy, being armed with sword and dagger, or rapier and dagger?

The Master.

I hold the low guard best, charging thy point directly to the enemy's breast, and always have a special regard, that thou proffer not a blow, for so he may defend it double on the backsword and dagger, and run in under the staff, likewise if thou proffer a thrust, let not thy staff loose out of thy forehand, but hold him fast, that thereby thou may be the more ready to charge him again, and again if he encroaches in upon thee, for if thou let

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go one hand, then may thy enemy very well defend the thrust of the staff, according as I have directed in the description of the rapier and dagger, concerning the staff, for with that one defense, being experienced in it, thou may endanger any staff man, that is not wary, and withal, well experienced in both these weapons, so that thou take thy opportunity upon his assault, I mean in answering him quick, so soon as you have defended his assault, whether it is blow or thrust.

Now if thy enemy does strike at the point of thy staff, thinking to cut him off, then, as you see his blow coming, let fall the point of your staff, and presently chop home a thrust, for in so doing his blow will fly over your staff, as by your practice you may be perfect in this slip, for so we call it. I have known a man with a sword and dagger has cut off the end of a pike-staff, but I hold him an ignorant and unskillful man, that has held the staff, for though I hold, that a man skillful at the sword and dagger may encounter against a reasonable staff man, the same opinion I hold still, and my reasons thou shall hear; if extreme need requires, and upon a necessity, then the best means is to be used wherefore to be furnished with the best means beforehand at the time of need, it may greatly stead thee, for every common man has not knowledge of the best rule, except he has learned it and practiced it by those which could show it, for it comes not by nature to none, yet every ignorant dunce, when he is persuaded to go learn skill, will say, when I am put to my shift I will do the best I can: so a man may, and yet without skill be killed, although

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he does his best, my opinion further of this follows.

Now the best guard with a sword and dagger, or rapier and dagger against a staff, is this, put your dagger on the inside of your rapier or sword, and join them both together, making your cross with them within a foot or thereabouts of the hilt of your rapier or sword, and looking clear with both your eyes under them, or betwixt both your weapons, and then if your enemy charges you with a blow at your head with his staff, bear them both double against the blow, and having defended it, turn your point and turn your knuckles inward of your right hand, and so to go in again upon him.

But if he charges you with a thrust, then presently let fall the point of your rapier downward, and force him down the more stronger, and more quicker with your dagger, for to that end I do appoint you to put your dagger in the inside of your rapier or sword. Lo in this manner you may defend either blow or thrust of the staff, yet I must needs confess, there is great odds in the staff, if the staff man is very skillful, but otherwise the rapier and dagger has the odds being furnished with skill.

False play to be used at the staff.

If you both lie in the low guard, according unto my former direction, then proffer or feign a thrust unto your enemy's face to the fairest side of the staff, which to your seeming lies most open or unguarded,

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but then presently in the same motion let fall the point of your staff so low as his girdle stead, so that you may pass clear under the butt end of his staff; for if with any part of his staff he touches or entangles your staff, then you cannot put in your false so directly as you should, or as you may, if you pass clear with your first offer, then may you bring up your point on the other side of his staff, and thrusting it home, you may hit him in the shoulder or face, as you will yourself, yea although he is very skillful or cunning, so that you have the true stroke of it: as to make it plainer, then in offering your false, do but fall the point of your staff, striking it as it were a blow, but let it fall two feet wide of that side, which lies open, and then bring it up again on the other side, and put it in with a thrust, for he will carry his staff to defend your false, and so by that means open the side which lies well guarded, and always mark which part of your enemy's body lies most open or most discovered unto you, there proffer you your feigned thrust, first to the fairest, but hit him with your second or determined thrust to the contrary side, and if you feign your thrust to the right side, then thrust it home to the left, and if you feign your thrust to the left side, then put it home to the right, and you may hit him in the breast, shoulder, or face, whither you list yourself, so that you proffer your feigned thrust three feet wide of his body, for if in offering your feigned thrust, he hits your staff, it will so entangle your point, that you cannot recover him to hit him with your determined thrust, for before you can clear your point, he will be in his guard of defense again.

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The defense of this false thrust.

This thrust is to be defended two ways, the first is to bear him against your enemy's proffer, but have a care that you do not overbear him, so that if he mocks you with his feigned thrust on the one side, you must quickly bring your staff back again into his place, to meet him when he comes on the other side of his staff, and so to defend it, keeping your point upright: now the second defense is to bear your staff over your body against his proffer, as you do against every ordinary thrust; for you must suppose that every thrust will come home, for the defender does not know if his enemy does proffer a thrust, whether it will come home or not: therefore (as I said) you must bear your staff against every thrust, but you should bear your staff but a foot out of his place, whether it is against blow or thrust: for if you overcarry him, you can not recover him to defend neither blow nor thrust, if it is falsified upon you. Now if your enemy does falsify upon his first proffer, carry your staff over your body, keeping the point upright against his first proffer: now upon your offer of defense, at the first you see that you make no seizure upon his staff, then presently you may perceive he does but dally with you, only to deceive you with false play, but then your proffer of defense, both for the true and false play, must be all done with one motion; for if you see that with the first proffer above he shortens his thrust, without putting it home, then turn down the point of your staff towards the ground, and meet him below, and

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so strike it away, but be sure that you defend always beforehand, for to strike it backward is no sure defense.

Yet to make this forehand defense plainer, why then it is thus meant, if your right hand is placed foremost in holding your staff, then you must defend both the true play, and the false towards your left hand, but you must not defend the first proffer forward, and the next, which may be the false thrust, backward, but both must be defended towards your left side: and so likewise, if your left hand is foremost, then frame your defense towards your right side, as before said.

Now if you cannot change hands, as (it may be) your enemy can, then keep your guard upon that hand you can best use, and you shall find that he has very little odds after you have practiced it a while; for you may offer to defend any false play so well as if you lay cross-handed one to the other.

A false blow.

Now if you would hit your enemy on the head with a blow, you must proffer a false blow at the head, as if you would strike him down at the first, but when it is come half way, stay your hand, or check your blow before it meets with his staff, for he will bear his staff against your blow, thinking to defend it strongly, before it comes to endanger him: but the checking of the first blow will be an occasion, that he will overcarry his staff beyond the compass of true defense, so that you may presently come with a second blow, and strike it home over the point of

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his staff, so by this determined blow, you may hit him on the head or face.

A slip at a staff.

If your enemy charges you with a blow, you lying in your guard according to the picture, even as you see the blow coming, pluck in your staff, and withal, withdraw your head and body a little back, bearing your staff, during the time while the blow has his passage, close upright by that side of your face which your enemy charges you at, to defend that side, if the blow does reach home, but if it does pass short, and goes clear of you, without touching your staff, then will his staff fly away with the greatest swing, so that it will pass beyond compass of true defense, but if it is a Welsh hook, or any other head weapon, then will the slipping of his blow be a more occasion of the overcarrying his blow, by carrying his body round, so that his blow being past, you may presently charge him with a blow at the head, or thrust him in the back, so that it is done quick before your enemy does recover his weapons into their place of defense.

Another falsify.

You may proffer a downright blow at your enemy's head, fetching him with a great compass, so that it may seem to your enemy, that you mean to strike him down, but as your blow is coming, draw back your hand and change your blow into a thrust, and chopping home to his breast or any other part of his body, that you will yourself, for he will bear his staff to defend the blow, I mean

[Aa recto]
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if he is not very skillful and cunning, the which if he does, he can but defend himself, the which to do he must be very wary when he bears his staff to defend then the blow, so that he does not overcarry his staff, and yet to bear him a little and then to check his staff, and be ready to turn down the point to defend the thrust, but he that is skillful will, or should chop out a thrust if his enemy does proffer a blow, and the thrust should be put out with one hand, and to loose the other, I mean with that hand which holds the butt end of the staff, for so thou shall keep him out at the point of thy staff; for then the blow cannot endanger thee, except there are great odds in the length of your staves, for commonly he that strikes, holds both his hands upon his staff when he delivers his blow, whereby there is three feet odds in reach betwixt the striker and he which thrusts.

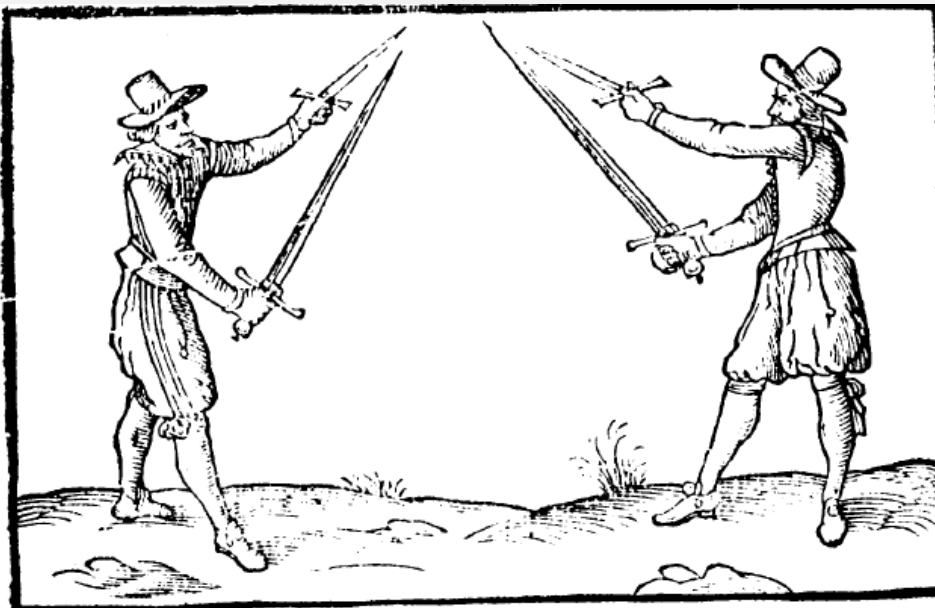
*Another very deceiving false thrust
at the staff.*

Thy enemy lying in guard, proffer a feigned thrust towards his foot, and then presently raise thy point again, and thrust it home to his face or breast, for if he turns down the point of his staff to save the false thrust below, then if he were never so cunning, or never so strong, yet can he not put up his staff time enough to defend his upper part; and therefore not to turn down the point, if thy enemy does proffer a thrust below is the more surest, but if a thrust is made below or above the knee, pluck up thy leg, and either thrust with him,

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or keep up thy staff to defend thy upper part, which are the killing places, rather than to turn him down to defend thy leg or foot, wherein is not so great danger of death as the body being hit, but at the staff all parts may be defended with skill.

The guard for the sword and dagger, the which for sureness we will call the castle guard.



I might here in this place describe many wards or guards, at the sword and dagger, as the look ward, the iron ward, the hanging ward, the cross ward, three high guards, the low guard, the broad ward. I will a little touch them all, or the most part of them with words, although not with pictures,

[Folio Aa2 recto]
[page 415 (sic)]

but in the next impression more at large, both with words and with pictures.

But now chiefly at this time I will proceed only with this castle guard, or backsword guard according to the picture, for with the skill of this one guard thou may safely encounter against any man, which uses any other of the foresaid guards, for this one guard being perfectly learned thou may defend thy self with great advantage,

Now for the manner of the framing thy self into this guard, thou must bear out the hilt of thy sword a foot from thy body, so low as the pocket of thy hose, and right out from thy thigh, and thy dagger outright at the arm's end, and the dagger hilt even with thy left cheek, but barely looking over the upper part of thy dagger hilt, and the points of both thy sword and dagger a little bowing each to the other, and close above, but open thy hilts so broad below as thou may see clearly thy enemy betwixt them both, as at rapier and dagger before is described, for both at rapier and dagger, the guards are both very near alike, but only for the carriage of thy rapier hand and foot, a little nearer thy body than at sword and dagger, the reasons are, and shall be made plain unto thee, as in reading thou shall find it, for both at rapier and dagger, and at sword and dagger, a man should be prepared as well at the one, as the other to defend a thrust in fight so well as a blow, except the rapier point is borne something high, he is not ready to defend a blow, as by this guard thus being placed, as aforesaid, thy sword only being borne out against the blow, will defend all thy right side, both thy head,

[Folio Aa2 verso]
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and down to thy knee, without moving him, but if thy enemy does charge thee with a blow at thy left side, whether he strikes to thy head or side, then bear both thy sword and thy dagger over thy body, towards thy left side, and withal I do advise thee to have a care to carry both the hilt and point level, even as thou lie in thy guard, for if thou carry thy hilt of thy sword over thy body towards thy left side, and turn thy point backward, then both at sword and dagger, and at rapier and dagger, thy head is endangered, for then thou have but a single ward for thy head, I mean thy dagger only, and that is no sure defense for the head, if thy practice were never so much, but both being borne together, according unto the backsword rule, thou shall defend both thy head and body down to thy knee very strongly, and thy leg must save himself by a quick pulling up of thy foot.

Likewise at sword and dagger, you may set your feet a foot distance one right before the other, the other which I do not allow of at rapier and dagger, also you must keep the point of your sword on the inside of your dagger, and half a foot higher than your dagger point, especially if you play at the blunt, but in fight as at rapier and dagger, then you must so exercise your foot, that you may pluck him up nimbly against every blow that comes, otherwise if you do keep them so near as my direction is at rapier and dagger, then is your foot sure without plucking of him up; bear your head upright, bowing rather to the right shoulder, than to the left, but not forward at any weapon, but your body bowing forward, and keep your points close together,

Thy weapons thus placed thou shall find thy body guarded like a prisoner betwixt two keepers, thy sword to guard thy right side, and thy dagger the left.

[Folio Aa3 recto]
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and your sword point on the inside of your dagger point (as before said) and the hilt of your dagger from your left cheek, right at the arm's end, without bowing of your elbow joint, and your dagger point sloping, or bowing towards your right side, looking with both your eyes betwixt your weapons, look not over your weapons with neither of your eyes at any hand; your weapons placed, and your body settled (as aforesaid) then shall you find no part of your body discovered or unguarded, but only your left side from the dagger arm downwards, and that you must have a care unto, and defend it in this manner.

If your enemy charges you with a blow, defend yourself, by bearing the edge of your sword against it, and a little bear your dagger against the blow also, only to give allowance for the yielding of your dagger, if the blow should chance to light at your head, for your guard simply of himself does defend but a weak blow; if you stand stock still at your guard as a wrist blow a drop or a mite, which comes with small force, though they come with more speed than any other blow, your guard will defend without moving your weapons. Now other blows which shall come with greater force, consume more time, and do fetch a greater compass, insomuch as their force is greater, you shall perceive them the plainer, to which side the blow will come, and if to the right side, then swerve both weapons against the blow, and if to the left side, do likewise keeping up the point of your sword, for that will defend from the head down to the knee, and the knee and leg which you stand foremost upon, you must defend by plucking

[Folio Aa3 verso]
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them up, and your sword will defend the hindmost leg, if the blow should chance to reach so far, by taking it near the hilt, upon the edge of your backsword, as aforesaid, for if you put down the point of your sword to save your leg, then you leave your head and your face unguarded, for when you see your enemy charge you with a blow, there is no rule to be shown to know where the blow will light, until it does light: but this assure yourself, the blow must have a lighting place; for when the sword is up, where he will fall there is no rule to be shown, for when the blow is charged, it comes so swift and lights where the striker thinks good; wherefore arm yourself to defend every place, whether it comes above or below; for if you turn down the point of your sword beforehand, thinking the blow will light at your leg, for so you must do if you will defend him with you sword, otherwise you cannot be down quick enough, for the blow will pass more speedier than the turning of a hand; wherefore I wish you to save your leg by plucking of him up, and open not your head, in hope to save your leg, and so save neither of them, for the head is the principal place that your enemy will strike at; therefore keep your points always upright, and in their place, according to my direction following the first picture; and likewise as here I have described it, for it is not enough to know the place of your weapons, but always to continue them in their place, except it is at the very instant time of your defense, and offense: but if you make play to offend your enemy, recover your weapons into your guard speedily again whether you hit or miss: Now in striking thy blow, let not thy

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sword swing under thine arm by overstriking thy blow, but wind him up presently into his place again; always keep the points close, and defend the blow double: for so doing the point of your sword will be a great strengthening unto your dagger, for he that does trust to defend a blow with the dagger only, may be deceived, if his cunning were never so good; for if the blow should light near the point of your dagger, by reason of the sharpness and weakness of the dagger, it may glide over, and hit him that is skillful, if his cunning were never so good: likewise, the blow may hit him under the dagger arm, which trusts to the dagger, except he uses the defense of his backsword, for which both together a weak man, yea, a boy may defend a strong man with both, for no man is able to charge a blow with one hand, if his force were never so great, but one that is very weak and skillful of the backsword, may defend himself double (as aforesaid) for he that charges with one hand, a very wretch is able to defend with both, having skill and practice in all fashions, for when one cannot hit thee, yet another whose fashion thou are unacquainted with may hit thee, but being experienced in many weapons, and in many guards, and practicing with many men, then if thou have an occasion to answer any one which thou never saw before, thou will presently call to mind, that he can but strike and thrust: therefore being prepared beforehand, then so soon as thou see his guard and charge, thou know thy defense.

Now (as I have said before) you must be careful in your defense, and so soon as you come within the reach of your enemy, prepare yourself into

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your guard, to defend every part both from blow and thrust, defending the blow with the backsword so low as your knee, and the point helping to strengthen the point of your dagger; then if your enemy charges you with a blow, you must not prepare to strike with him, for so you may be hurt, and then say afterward, I thought he would have struck at mine head, and so never reckon upon your side nor your leg, or if you should think he would have struck at your leg, and so never regard your head: But I say you must not deal upon thought, but upon a sure guard, and it is not sufficient, to know your guard of defense, but you must keep him, for if your enemy has once hit you for want of keeping your guard, it will be too late for you to remember your defense afterwards, therefore look to it afore the blow does light; or if you fight at rapier and dagger, you must look for both blow and thrust, for your enemy may strike with his rapier, and hit you if you do not look for a blow, and when you are hit, it is too late to say, I thought he would not have struck with his rapier. Again, at sword and dagger, it may be your enemy will thrust, and you must not say, I thought he would not thrust, for every one will, in a quarrel, do what his affection leads him best unto, except he alters his affection by practice.

*Here follows the chiefest blows at sword
and dagger, and the manner how to
perform them.*

Now for thy best advantage, in as plain manner, as by words I can express them, amongst many other blows, we will here observe these

[folio Bb recto]

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three: the first, a wrist blow, a half blow, and a quarter blow; every one of these must be used in their time and place (as this) sometimes with a wrist blow, thou may speed thine enemy when thou cannot hit him with a half blow, nor with a quarter blow, because there is in the delivering of either of the two last blows, more time spent, for every blow exceeds each other, in force, and in quickness; this wrist blow will hit thine enemy either head or face, if his points lie anything open, or on either side of his head, if he does look over either of his weapons: for although he does see it coming never so plain, yet he cannot prevent it, if he had *Argus*' eyes⁴³, if his weapons are but an inch too low, but if your enemy does lie more open, then you may charge him with a half blow, or a full quarter blow but the quarter blow serves best for the leg. If thine enemy does encroach or gather in upon thee, then strike down to his leg and bear up thy dagger over thy head, with the point something sloping towards thy right shoulder, for so thy dagger will save thy head, and the point of thy sword will hit him on the leg in his own coming, and the upper part of thy sword will defend thine own leg, if he charges thee in thine own assault; but so soon as thou have struck thy blow, recover thy guard hastily again: the quarter blow does fetch a compass about the head, that although he comes strong, it is not so quick as many others: now there is a washing blow, which the unskillful do use much, and with that blow thou may hit thy enemy under the dagger arm, if he is not skillful, with his backsword, for there is no other defense for it, but the backsword only.

⁴³ Argus (or Argos) Panoptes was a giant in Greek mythology, often portrayed as having one hundred eyes.

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Then there is a whirling blow, and that is after thou have weft⁴⁴ thy sword, or flourished him over thine head twice or thrice, thou may deliver thy blow, either to the head or leg, or to what place thou see most for thine advantage, for it is such an uncertain blow, that he must be a good player that defends it.

Also there is a back blow which is to be made two ways, the one is a plain Dunstable way, that is, to fetch thy sword from off thy left shoulder, and so to strike it to the right side of thy enemy's head, or to the outside of his right leg, but the cunningest way is to bow thy sword-elbow joint, and with thy knuckles upward, and thy sword hilt so high as your ear, and then by turning of your sword-hand wrist, bend, or proffer the point of thy sword with a blow towards your enemy's dagger ear, by presently turning your wrist, bring the midst of your sword close over the crown of thy head, and with a compass blow, striking it home to his sword ear, or to the outside of his leg: I cannot with words make this blow so plain as I would, for I would gladly the ignorant should understand it, for of all the blows of true play, this is the best, for you may likewise feign it unto the outside of your enemy's head, and strike it home to the other, or unto his side.

Here follows the false play at sword and dagger.

If your enemy is in this guard, as I have here described by false play, you may cause him to open his guard, but if he lies upon any other guard, then you need not to falsify, for you may hit him with true play.

⁴⁴ Obsolete past tense for "waft."

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If you would hit your enemy on the right side of the head, then strike a blow to his foot, but strike it somewhat short, then presently bring it with a back blow to his right ear, the which will be unguarded, by reason of the carrying his sword to save his left side, if he is not the better grounded with experience.

And if you would hit him on the side of his head, then thrust a full thrust at his belly, turning your knuckles inward, and he will put down his dagger to defend it, but then, so soon as you have offered your thrust, presently bring up your sword close up by the outside of his dagger elbow, and with a wrist blow strike him on the ear or head, keeping your knuckles inward, til the blow is delivered: with this blow you may hit a good player, but indeed it is not a very strong blow. Now to hit thy enemy in the foot, is to thrust two or three thrusts short at his face, and then fall it down to the leg or the foot with a blow, for the fear of the endangering of his face with a thrust will make him forget his leg.

Another way is to strike a back blow strongly to his sword ear, and presently fall it down to his foot, for he seeing it come to his head, not one in twenty, but will wink, and before he opens his eyes again, you may hit him upon his foot or leg.

But the chiefest blow of all for the leg, is to lift up the heel of your sword hand higher than your head, and tip in the point over your enemy's sword, as though you would hit him in the right eye, but presently bring down your sword with a full blow to the inside of his leg, for this blow in offering

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aloft, will sure make him wink and deceive a skillful man, and if in the lifting up of your sword, you say, beware your foot, it will serve to him, that you go about to hit him on the head, so he will lift up his weapons to save the head, but this blow being cunningly delivered comes down to the leg, with such celerity and violence, that he cannot prevent it, except he has been used to it with much practice, but it seldom misses if it is cunningly delivered.

Yet there is another deceitful blow for the leg or foot, that is, to strike a back blow to the sword ear (as before said) stepping out your foot with your blow a little, and see that your blow reaches but to his sword, it is enough, but hastily pluck back your foot, and your sword in their place, and provide to charge him with a blow to the foot, as he comes in to answer your first blow: now in striking at his leg, be a little before hand; for as he makes a motion of lifting up his sword to charge you, step in with the same motion, and in falling your point to his leg, you save your own leg, if he does strike at your leg, then the dagger must at such a time, defend your head single, which you may very well do, if you bear him a little the higher, but withal, turn the dagger point down towards the right shoulder.

Also, you may deceive some, with casting your eyes down, and looking to his foot, and presently strike it home to his head, for with your eye you may deceive him which is not perfect in this deceit.

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Certain reasons why thou may not strike with thy weapon in fight.

The first danger is described following the first picture in this book, and in this manner, the defender is to take the blow double, or on the backword only, and then presently to charge him again with the point, with the which the defender may hit the striker in the face, breast or thigh, as he wills himself, the like may be done with a staff, first, defend the blow, and answer quick with a thrust.

The next danger, if it is with a sword, is this, thou may break or bow him, or he may slip out of the hilts, any of these dangers may happen at the very first blow that thou strike, and if it is a staff it may likewise be broken, or the pike may fly out, and then thou are not assured whether thy enemy upon such an occasion will take the advantage upon thee, if such a chance does fall out, therefore beware of striking.

Another hazard by striking is unto the striker, if his enemy the defender does but slip his blow by a little withdrawing of his body back, even as he sees the blow come, and so I say by a little withdrawing the body, and also by plucking in his weapons, he that strikes the blow will oversway his body beyond the compass of true defense, and so the blow being past, charge him presently with a thrust, for he that strikes his blow will carry his body in a manner round, so that the blow is not defended, but let slip, as aforesaid, and then you may hit him in the back, either with a blow or thrust, if you take

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your opportunity in making a quick answer, as more at large of this slight I have shown in the false play at each weapon, also diverse reasons here and there in this book, concerning the disadvantage of a blow.

*The author's opinion concerning the odds betwixt
a left-handed man, and a right-handed man.*

A left-handed man being skillful has odds against a right-handed man being skillful likewise, one reason is a left-handed man is always used unto a right-handed man, but a right-handed man does seldom meet with a left-handed man, for in schools or such places, where play is, a man may play with forty men, and not meet with two left-handed men, except it is a great chance, another reason is, when a right-handed man does offer or make play, first unto the left-handed man, then does he endanger the right side of his head, although he does bear his dagger to the right side, yet it does not defend so strong, nor so sure, as it does the left, yet unto one that is well instructed with the true skill of the backsword, and other rules which belong for the best advantage against a left hand, it will be the less dangerous or troublesome unto such a one, for he will presently call himself to mind, when he sees that he is to encounter against a left-handed man, he will frame himself presently to the best guard of defense for that purpose which is the backsword, for that is the chiefest weapon to be grounded in, not only a left hand, but many other weapons have the

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true stroke of that weapon, and are guided only by the rules of the backsword, even as the helm guides the ship, now if thou offer play, first to the left-handed man, thou must be careful and heedy to recover up thy backsword again, presently into his place so quick as thou can, or else turn over your dagger to the right ear, these very rules likewise must a left-handed man observe to encounter against a right-handed man, yet furthermore I have known some right-handed men, that were very skillful, and very ready if it had been to encounter against a right-handed man, but by no means would not deal with a left-handed man, and this was for want of a good teacher: for the teacher should instruct every one which they do teach by playing with his left hand with them, for it is an easy matter to have the odds of both the hands alike with little practice, and then a man may use which he will, as if a right-handed man were to encounter against a left, and can use both hands alike, then if he plays with his left hand against one that is left handed by nature, it will seem more cross, and more dangerous unto him than a left-handed man unto a right, the reason is that two left-handed men seldom meet together, now to end with this one speech according to the vulgar sort, that is an ignorant and a simple man of skill by great and often toiling and moiling of his body, in practicing natural play, I mean only that which comes into his head, and being right handed meets with another right-handed man that is very skillful, and has very artificial play, and yet the unskillful has plied so fast and let his blows fall so thick, that the skillful man had enough ado to defend

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himself, so that the unskillful has made such good shift, and defended himself contrary unto any man's expectation, that was so experienced and saw it, but there is not one of the common street players in a hundred that can do the like as I have said before, but not one in five hundred of them, that can upon the point of a weapon hurt or wrong one that is skillful or cunning, for many of these street players are so used to bangs, that they care not for a blow with a blunt cudgel, but most of them are fearful to deal against a sharp weapon, but now to conclude this, with that which touches this chapter, concerning these street players, which have so well shifted with a cunning player right handed, the same I say meeting with a left-handed man was not able to defend in a manner one blow in twenty, except it were in falling back from him, and the cunningest man that is, cannot hit the unskillfulest man that is, if the unskillful man does continually keep him out of his reach or distance, for he which has courage without skill, although well prepared, yet wants his arms to fight, but of this it is sufficiently spoken of in the treatise, in the former part of the book.

A brief of my principal points which I would have thee keep in continual remembrance.

Now to sum up all the chiefest lessons into one sum, and for order's sake we will make four divisions of them.

The first is to remember to frame thy self into thy guard, before thou come within thy enemy's

[Folio Cc recto]
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distance, and so to approach in guarded.

Secondly, remember if thy enemy charges thee with a blow, at what weapon soever, yet answer him with a thrust presently, after you have borne the blow double, according to my direction, following the first picture, but if thy enemy charges thee with a thrust, then answer him with a thrust at the nearest place, which lies most unguarded, whether it is his knee or in his making play, your answer may be to his right arm, shoulder or face, all which you shall find unguarded in time of his proffer, now if he has a close-hilted dagger, yet with a false thrust thou may hit him in the dagger arm if he fights not very warily, or else in the dagger hand if he has not a close-hilted dagger.

Thirdly, let not fury overcome thy wits, for in a mad fury skill is forgotten, for he which is in drink or over-hasty, such a one in his anger does neither think upon the end of killing, nor fear to be killed.

Now the fourth and last which should have been the first, is to remember to keep a true distance, and if thy enemy does gather and encroach in upon thee, charge him with a thrust, although thou put it not home, for a thrust will fear him, and he which is in his right wits will be loath to come within the reach, or danger of thy weapon, but if thou suffer thy enemy to come within distance, then if thou had all the guards in the world, and yet stand still without making play, he will hit thee in spite of thy teeth, wherefore be doing with him betimes; and he will retreat and fall away from thee for his own ease. Lo, this I wrote, because I would not have thee in

Be constant and steady in a good guard be slow to make play except thy enemy does increase upon thee.

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an error when thou should have occasion to use thy weapon, as the best defense, for a shot is to stand out of the reach of him, even so the best defense of thy body from hurts and scars is to be preceded beforehand with skill and cunning, and to remember it when thou have occasion to use it , but if thou want skill, then keep out of thy enemy's reach; now if thou cannot remember these four chief points before said, yet bear in mind these two, the first is to defend the blow double, keeping both the points upward, and secondly, remember that if thy enemy does gather in upon thee, thrust to his knee, or whether he does gather in or no, yet thrust to his knee or thigh, but at any hand step not so far forth with your thrust whereby to endanger your face, but if you do step so far forth as you can, always have a care to defend with your dagger, but if your enemy does set forth one foot above half a foot distance, then may you hit him in the thigh or knee, and he cannot reach you so that you do not adventure further with your thrust, then where his knee did stand when you did offer, for it may be he will pluck him away, thereby to save him, but that is no defense for a thrust if it is put in quick: a man may defend the leg from a blow, by drawing him back, but not from a thrust, but to keep thy feet in the right place according to my direction following the first picture, and then you are defended, and ready to offend also.

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The author's opinion concerning the short sword and dagger.

In describing of this weapon I shall account the time ill spent, yet because short swords are in use and worn of many that would leave them off if that they knew what an idle weapon it were, I mean to encounter against a long sword and dagger, or a long rapier and dagger, so small is their judgment, but only this, many of them will say it is a better weapon than any of the two foresaid weapons are, but in my mind they may as well say that chalk is cheese because they are both white, for I have had much trial and great practice with the short sword, yet could I never find, nor never will be persuaded but that a rapier four feet long or longer, has such great odds, that I never mean to arm myself with a short against it; for in my mind and by experience I speak it, there is small skill to be learned with the short sword to encounter as aforesaid, but only resolution and courage.

He that is valiant and venturous, runs in, breaking distance, if he escapes both in his going in, and in his coming out unhurt; from a man skillful, in my mind it is as a man would say chance-medley, for if I have the rapier and dagger, I will hazard both games, and set against any man that holds the short sword to be a better weapon, although that *George Silver*⁴⁵ has most highly commended that short sword and dagger, yet one swallow makes not a Summer, nor two woodcocks a Winter, if a thousand more were of his opinion, yet without all doubt there is a great

⁴⁵ The original printing reads "George Giller." In context, this is obviously a misprint for George Silver. Some have argued that this was a mistake on Swetnam's part, however, given the context, Swetnam's obvious familiarity with Silver's printed book, the manner in which books were produced, as well as the other errors in this printing, the error is certainly the fault of the printer.

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deal more danger than at rapier and dagger; for he that fights with a short sword must adventure in pell-mell without fear or wit, but I have seldom heard or seen any fight with short sword and dagger, although they are each weaponed alike, but one or both comes home most grievous wounded: my reason is the distance is so narrow that a man can hardly observe it, except they have been both practitioners a long time beforehand, for if a man practices continually long sword or long rapier, yet upon such a challenge goes into the field with a short sword, then the danger is greatest of all: ask *Augustin Badger*,⁴⁶ who speaks highly in praise and commendation of the short sword, for he has tried that weapon in the field so often, and made as many tall frays as any man that ever I heard of or knew since my time, yet he will say that he never fought in all his life: but was sore and dangerously hurt.

I have known some besides myself, that have fought with rapier and dagger twenty times, and never had one drop of blood drawn, and yet were accounted men of sufficient valor and resolution, those which wear short swords, depend only upon the taking of the enemy's point, which is not to be done if they meet with with one that is skillful: I have heard many say in talking familiarly concerning this weapon, if I take the point of your long rapier, then you are gone, but that is not to be done if thou meet with one that is skillful except thou can take thy enemy's point in thy teeth, otherwise thou can never make seizure upon his point, if he is skillful as aforesaid, but

⁴⁶ In his *Paradoxes of Defence*, Silver relates an episode with an Austin Bagger, who, with his sword and buckler, fought and sorely defeated the Italian Signior Rocco and his two-handed sword. This is almost certainly the same person.

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indeed it is an easy matter for a man skillful to take the point of one that is altogether unskillful; but rather not answer thy enemy until thou art better weaponed, there are all these excuses to be framed as in the tenth chapter of the treatise, there you may find excuses fit for such as wear short swords, if thou like them not I refer to thy own wit to frame an excuse; for some shift he must have that wears such an idle weapon, for in a word a short sword and dagger to encounter against a skillful man with rapier and dagger, I hold it a little better than a tobacco pipe, or a fox tail, but yet a short sword is good to encounter against a short sword.

Also a short sword is good to encounter against a naked man, I mean a man unweaponed, and it is good to serve in the wars on horseback or on foot, yet a rapier will do as good service in the wars as a short sword, if a skillful man has him in hand: we have diverse examples of those which come out of the field sore wounded, and they will say it was because their enemy had a handful or a foot odds in length of weapon upon them; wherefore I say one inch is great odds and enough to kill a man, if they both have skill alike, and do observe a true distance: yet now you that are as it were married unto short swords, because some will not give their Bible for the Tower of *London*, although another does not esteem it worth two pence, yet a man shall as well drive a dog from a piece of bread, as wrest many from that foolish kind of weapon; again a sword whether he is long or short, is more wearisome and more troublesome than a rapier, for a sword will wear out your hose and three pairs of hangers, before a rapier does wear out one pair;

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but some do wear their short swords about their necks in a string, so that if they should have occasion to use him, he cannot so ready draw out his sword upon a sudden, as he which wears him upon his thigh, but of this fashion of wearing their swords, I will not speak much, because I see it is almost left off, for a man may buy a girdle and hangers for ten groats, which will serve for thy rapier two or three years, and a scarf will cost ten shillings, and yet be worn out in a fortnight; but I will say no more because many give it over for their own ease, I hold a short sword for to encounter against a rapier very little better than a tobacco pipe as aforesaid, and so as I began I conclude, yet behold a little help for him that wears it.

A guard for the short sword and dagger to encounter against the long rapier and dagger, or else the long sword and dagger.



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Keep your sword hilt so high as your head or higher at the point, hanging slope-wise downwards a little wide of your left side, looking under your sword arm with both your eyes, and withal put out your sword hand as far from your body as you can, I mean towards your enemy, and your dagger down by your side, as if you meant not to use him at all, according to this picture. Lying in this guard your body will seem to your enemy to be very open, insomuch that he will make no reckoning but to hit you sure with a thrust; the which you must defend by breaking it towards your right side, and with the same motion step in with your left leg, which I will call your hindmost leg, for so he should be until you have made seizure of your enemy's weapon: but so soon as seizure is made consume no time in giving of him leisure to fall back again, whereby to recover his point again, but forthwith answer him as aforesaid, for having brought his long rapier or sword point to pass clear on the right side of your body, I mean under your right arm, then step in close with your left foot as aforesaid, and make a cross with your dagger upon his weapon by clapping in with your dagger upon the midst of thy enemy's long rapier or sword, keep your dagger point upright when you go in, and so soon as you have discharged the assize of your sword, you may presently turn up the point of your short sword and thrust, or else you may give a stroke with him whether you will, and to what part of his body you list, and then fall away hastily again into your guard and distance; know this, that by stepping in with your hindmost foot, does gain more advantage

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in ground than you want in length of weapon.

But at any hand suffer your enemy to make the first assault, because he has the advantage in length of weapon, and if thy enemy does charge thee with a blow you may defend it upon this hanging guard, but to turn up the point of your sword according to backsword rule, and if your enemy charges you with a thrust, you may after seizure made upon his weapon with your sword as before directed; you may presently so soon as you are in with the hindmost foot turn up your sword point and thrust, this offense you may perform without the help of your dagger, but yet have a care to prepare your dagger in a readiness, lest in your going in, your enemy does also come in with you, and although you have his long weapon at your command without any danger, yet may he stab you with his dagger, except your dagger is in a readiness to defend; for a thrust of a dagger is as easy to be defended with a dagger, as any thrust is of any other weapon, but if the defender is overcome with fury, and so thrust both together, then they both are endangered, but to defend is better than to offend, and to be offended again upright according to the rule of the backsword, if your defense is upon the hanging guard, then clap up your dagger and join with him as it were in commission with your sword, and so defend the blow upon both together, now if your enemy will not charge nor make any assault upon you, then I advise you not to gather nor encroach upon him, except you were equally matched in weapon, for you must observe the distance which belongs to your enemy's long weapon for this guard or any other. For this guard is but for a

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sudden shift for those that wear short swords, for keeping a large distance a man with small skill may defend himself from a longer weapon, so he seeks not hastily by gathering in to offend the other; for the best defense of a shot is to stand out of his watch; so the best defense for a short-sword man is to observe distance as before said, for he shall find himself work enough to defend himself, for not one in twenty which fights with the short sword once will desire to go into the field with such a weapon again.

Now those that do encounter together with short sword, to short sword, I wish them to frame their guard according to my former direction at the long sword and dagger.

If thou frame thy guard according to my former direction as it is here pictured, then if your enemy does falsify a thrust, and you making account to defend it with your sword, as before, and in turning in your left side he doubles a thrust, he may endanger you greatly; wherefore it behooves thee not to overcarry thy sword upon the first offer, but that you may recover him back into the place again; so that if you have a care if you miss the striking by of his sword on the one side because of his falsify, you shall meet with him on the other, and so defend yourself although you cannot answer whereby to offend him by reason of his falsify, for upon a false if you make answer, it will be very dangerous to both.

Master. Now my loving scholar I have already described the rules of six weapons, which I promised to instruct thee in, but yet I have stumbled by chance upon another weapon, which is as necessary as any of the rest; nay more, for without thou be perfect in

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the skill of this weapon, all the rest will rather be hurtful unto thee than do thee good.

Scholar. I pray you, what weapon is that?

Master. Marry it is a fair tongue.

Scholar. Why do you call the tongue a weapon?

Master. Because at many times, and for many purposes, it is the fittest weapon, and the most surest for a man's own defense, for the tongue at sometimes runs so at random, that for want of a bridle like a young colt overthrows the rider, although it is but a little thing and seldom seen, yet it is often heard to the utter confusion of many a man, for the tongue is such a weapon without it be governed, it will cut worse than any sword; a nettle is a bad weed in a garden, but the tongue will sting worse than a nettle, and prick deeper than a thorn, likewise many men are taken by the tongues as birds are taken by the feet, therefore a fair tongue or a tongue governed well, will better keep and defend thy body from prison, if thou at any time are committed by the magistrates when thy sword will hinder thee if thou trust unto thy manhood.

Scholar. If I fight with no other weapon, but with a fair tongue, the world will condemn me, and term me for a coward.

Master. A fair tongue is more necessary for a valorous man, than a good weapon is for a coward, as thou shall hear: for with a fair tongue thou may pass through watch and ward, if thou do chance to travel in the night by occasion, and thou are late from thy lodging, at such a time this is a principal weapon, and shall more prevail than thy sword, or any other weapon whatsoever.

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Again, a fair tongue is an excellent weapon, if thou hap in a drunken company, and there fall to quarrelling; in such a case, if thou draw thy weapon, it were as if a man should quench a great fire with a bundle of flax, for at such a time, and in such a company, if a man draws his weapon, he may as soon be killed as kill, for drunkards and mad men are all alike during time of the drink.

Also a fair tongue is a principal weapon to carry with thee, if thou chance to travel into any strange country: for if an injury is offered in a place where thou are not acquainted or unknown, thou may be oppressed with more than one, for birds of a feather will hold together; and many will hold on the bigger side, for where the hedge is lowest, the beasts will soonest get over, but in such a case be well armed with patience for thy buckler, and a fair tongue for thy sword, and thy hand ready on thy hat to do reverence to every vassal, although thou are a gentleman, for the richest man that is, and the strongest man that ever was, did, and must pocket up an injury in his own country, much more it is less disgrace to thee to put up an injury in a strange place, if an occasion is offered, then rather bestir thy self with a fair tongue, than with thy sword; for in such a case thy sword will avail thee nothing at all.

Scholar. All this while with this weapon you have not taught me how I should defend my point.

Master. Now I will tell thee, with a fair tongue, thou may save thy money many times, by promising much, and performing little, especially where little is deserved, for those which deserve little, a fair promise will pass, in a manner, as current as thy money:

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I have known many musicians many times paid with fair words: and now that it comes into my mind I will tell thee a tale (as I have heard it reported:) How King *Dionysius* rewarded a crew of musicians which came to him with excellent music, and after the music was ended, come again to me tomorrow said the King, and I will give you a thousand talents; the which promise sounded to a sweet and pleasant tune in the musicians' ears: But in the morning they came, expecting the King's reward, according to his promise: But the King looked strangely upon them, and asked them what they would have, And it like Your Highness, said one of the chiefest of them, we are come for your gracious reward which you promised us. What was that, said the King? A thousand talents said the fiddler. Why said the King, Is not that out of thy head yet? thy music is quite out of mine, thou pleased my ears with thy music for the present, and I likewise filled thy ears with a pleasant sound of so much money: to our matter again.

A fair tongue, and kind behavior win favor, both with God and men, whereas those which cannot govern their tongues are seldom at quiet; but always punished or vexed with the law, and troubles in the law consume much money, which with discretion might be kept by government of the tongue.

Now by the highway, if a careless roisterer in his own name requires thee to stand, and by virtue of his own warrant does require thy purse; in such a danger, and in such a case betake thy self to thy weapon, rather than trust to thy tongue: for to speak fair unto some in such a case will avail thee nothing at all, but yet for all that, a fair tongue is a precious balm to bear

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about thee although it is not sufficient to heal wounds, yet it may be a preservative to keep thee without hurts: all the comfort thou can have of thy dearest friends is but little else than bodily sustenance, nay if thy kind and loving wife which is or should be thy greatest comfort in this life under God, if she I says does all that ever she can to pleasure thee, yet thou may hap to find in this book, if thou read it over, one lesson or other which may stead thee, or do thee more pleasure than all thy other friends: for here are many things written by me, that peradventure thou may seek after a great while, and yet not find them elsewhere, and so farewell.

Scholar. Yet stay I pray you, resolve me in two questions more afore you go.

Master. What are they?

Scholar. First I would know what odds a tall man of stature has against a little man's stature, and the odds that a strong man has against a weak man.

Master. Indeed these are questions which I did mean to write of in my next book, and therefore will but little touch them at this time, but for my beginning or proof of this matter the better to encourage little men to take heart of grace, and not to be dismayed by the high looks of a tall man, nor feared by their great brags, there is an old saying, *goes I never saw*, says the proverb, *a little man borrow a stool to break a tall man's head*, and this proverb runs throughout the world, as the current through the gulf which our mariners do speak of in the way towards the Indies.

Again, it is not common to see a tall man valorous

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and skillful withal, but generally, little men are valorous although not skillful, now if the tall man is skillful, the little man must for his advantage, suffer the tall man to proffer him play first, but then upon the little man's defense presently, with the same motion step forth with foot and hand, and so by a quick answer endanger the tall man: now if the tall man is not skillful, whereby to step forth with his hand and foot together, when he makes play to the little man, then the little man skillful herein, gets three feet at the least by answering every assault that the tall man makes by stepping forth with the foot and hand as before said; but this must be thy help and this must be thy care, though a little man always suffers the tall man to make play first, especially if he is skillful, and then be nimble with the answer, stepping it home with thy foot and hand together, according to my directions, following the first picture, for what thou want in reach, is gotten by thy coming.

There is another old saying going thus, a tall man is so fair a mark, that a little man skillful cannot miss him, and a short man is so little and so nimble, that if he has but a little skill, a tall man cannot hit him for with his weapons, and a good guard in a manner he will cover all his whole body with his weapons. Lo this is my opinion, I do not say all others are of my mind, for there is an old saying goes thus, so many men, so many minds, what other men's opinions are, I have not to do withal, but this I can say of my own knowledge, that I have not known one tall man amongst twenty, that has good skill, nor sufficient valor answerable unto

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their statures, for tall men are more fearful than men of a mean stature, for I have seen the trial both in the wars and in single combat; yet take me not up before I am down, for I do not here condemn all tall men of personage, for so I should greatly overshoot myself, and greatly wrong many tall men of stature and valor, and also of good resolution, but yet all of them are not so, wherefore what I have said, it is to encourage little men of mean stature, having skill not to fear any man upon good occasion, those that spend their days without practicing skill in weapons, so that when they are wronged they fall to wishing: oh I would to God I had skill in my weapon, for then would I answer the wrong that such a man, and such a man has done me, but I could wish such unskillful to live quiet, and not to maintain any quarrel, lest they lose their lives for want of experience, as many of them have done.

Scholar. Now as you have promised me, I pray you let me hear your opinion concerning the odds between a strong man of strength, and a little or a weak man of stature and strength.

Master. Then this briefly is my opinion, a strong man has great odds at the grip, or in a close at any blunt weapon, but upon the point of a sharp weapon, in fight a strong man has small or no odds at all of the little or weak man, wherefore I would not have a little man be afraid of a tall or overgrown man, no although he were far bigger than a man, for in performance of any things to be done with weapons, there is no more to be found in the best of them of great stature upon trial, than is in

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the ordinary men, or than is in a little or weak man, nay many times the little or weak man does as good or better service in the face of the enemy upon the point of the weapon than the taller man does, for although his stature is small, yet commonly a little man's heart is big.

Observations for a scholar or any other.

What length thy weapons should be.

How you should button your foils for your practice.

An easy way to weapon thy self at time of need.

Let thy rapier or sword be four feet at the least, and thy dagger two feet, for it is better have the dagger too long than too short, and rather hard than soft, for a short dagger may deceive a skillful man his defense, either of blow or thrust: I have often known a soft dagger cut in twain with a rapier.

Let thy staff of practice be seven or eight feet, and better, button both thy foils and thy staves before the practice with them, for otherwise the unskillful may thrust out one another's eyes, yea although there was no harm meant, yet an eye may be lost except the occasion is prevented.

To make your buttons take wool or flax, and wrap it round in leather so big as a tennis ball,⁴⁷ then make a notch within a half an inch of your wooden foil or staff, but if it is an iron foil, then let there be an iron button riveted on the point, so broad as two pence,⁴⁸ and then take your button being made as before said, and set it on the end of

⁴⁷ Tennis balls varied over time, locale, and method of play. However, in the Museum of London there is a tennis ball (ID A23502) dated between the late 15th and early 16th centuries. It is made of leather and compacted dog hair, with a diameter of 40 mm (1.57 in), and a weight of 45 g (1.59 oz) (<http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/Online/object.aspx?objectID=object-119138&rows=1&start=0> accessed: 5/16/2014).

⁴⁸ British coins were not milled until about 1625. Prior to this, they were hammer-struck, resulting in coins of irregular diameter. Single penny coins of the period could be as small as 11 or 12mm. However, Swetnam may have meant a two-pence coin (also called a half-groat). Half-groat coins from the period listed on various websites have diameters ranging from 13-17mm. This would give his foil button's diameter a range of 13-22mm or so, or anywhere from about one-half to one inch. For comparison, a United States dime is 17.91mm and a United States quarter is 24.26mm.

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your staff or foil likewise, and then take leather and draw hard upon it, and bind it with shoemaker's ends of parck-thread in the notch, and another leather upon that again, for one leather may be worn out with a little practice.

Now if thou have a quarrel and willing to answer, and being not furnished with a rapier, then take a cudgel of what length thou will thy self, and make a shoulder within a handful of the end of it by cutting him halfway through, and there bind the haft of thy knife, and so the shoulder will keep him from slipping back, and this is as sure and as fearful, and as good as a rapier to encounter against a rapier and dagger, or a sword and dagger, so that you have a close-hilted dagger: likewise you may tie a point at the butt end of the cudgel, to put in thy finger that thy cudgel slips not out of thy hand: this weapon I have made good proof of, but it was in another country, where I could get no other weapon to my mind.

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Chapter XII (ed: should be Chapter XIII)

*This chapter shows the several kinds
of weapons which are to be played at.*

Now one thing more unto the vulgar sort concerning the several sorts of weapons, because unto many it seems so strange, that if a master of defense should tell them that he can teach them skill at fence at twelve several sorts of weapons, they will straightaway say, that there are not so many: now for their further satisfaction, they shall hear the division of more than twenty sorts of weapons, which masters of this noble art of defense, are, or, else ought to be expert therein, like unto a skillful cook which can of one sort of meat make diverse dishes, or like the cunning physician, who can with a herb being diversely compounded, make it serve to diverse purposes and uses: to which effect my meaning is, that an expert master of defense can of one kind of weapon make many, as by this sequel following shall appear, all these weapons have been played at in challenges, here in *England* at several times.

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Of the sword are derived these seven.

The two hand sword.
The backsword.
Sword and dagger.
Sword and buckler.
Short sword and dagger.
The short sword and

gauntlet.
The bastard sword, the
which sword is something
shorter than a
long sword, and yet
longer than a short sword.

Now with the rapier seven more.

The first rapier and dagger.
The single rapier.
The case of rapiers.
The rapier and cloak.
The rapier and target.
The rapier and gauntlet.
The rapier and pike.

The Dutch falchion.
The poleaxe.
The battle-axe.
The two daggers.

The single dagger.

The half pike.
The long pike.
The long staff.
The quarterstaff.
The Welsh hook or bill.
The halberd.
The rapier and dagger against short sword and
dagger.
Likewise rapier and dagger or sword
and dagger against a staff or halberd.
Also the staff against a flail.

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Backsword against sword and
dagger.

Single rapier against rapier and
dagger.

Now my second book which is already in hand shall show my judgment, and chiefest rules according unto my practice at all these several weapons, if death does not prevent me before I have accomplished my pretense, yet for doubt thereof, the defense of the staff with a rapier and dagger, or with sword and dagger I will give thee a little direction, which being practiced it may stead thee as much as thy life is worth. I do this the rather, and for because that the staff is a weapon which many men do carry, and with skill it has great odds against either of the two aforesaid weapons, but yet because every man which carries a weapon, has the perfect skill in that weapon which he carries, but admits that he has good skill, yet in knowing the best defense, it may prevent thee from a danger.

Now thou must remember if thou are charged upon with a staff, suddenly summon up thy wits in that which beforehand thou have learned for thy defense, and think this with thy self; I am now to encounter against a staff: why then thus frame thy guard, put thy dagger across on the inside of thy rapier or sword, and let the cross be made within half a foot of thy rapier or sword hilt, bearing up both thy hilts even so high as thy cheek, looking with both thy eyes betwixt both thy weapons.

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Thus being guarded, it may be, that thine enemy will charge thee with a thrust, for because thy breast will seem most open to him, the which and if he does, then turn down the point of thy rapier and sword, and with thy dagger force him down which will be a stronger defense than with one alone: and thus by turning down both thy points together, strike thine enemy's thrust of the staff towards thy right side: Lo, thus do me with both thy weapons; then will thine enemy's thrust pass clear under thy right arm, but neither with the sword nor yet with the dagger alone; the thrust of a staff is not to be defended without greater danger than with both of them, as before has been rehearsed.

Now and if thine enemy does chance to charge thee with a blow, thereby thinking to drive both thy rapier and dagger, or sword and dagger unto thy head: for I have known many to be of that opinion with me. But the blow of a staff, struck at the head, may be defended with the single sword or rapier according unto the backsword rule: but to bear thy dagger with thy rapier or sword, that is the most sure way, keeping both thy points upright, and so to bear them towards the right side, or to thy left side, according as thou shall perceive thine enemy charges thee.

Thus will I here conclude and make an end with this short direction concerning this one weapon, because I have spoken something already touching and concerning this purpose, although it is not so ample as now it is, and yet hereafter (by Almighty God's good help) I will speak more at large hereof,

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this only serves but to rouse up your spirits, that you may the better prepare yourself for the next. The horse starts at the spur, so (in love) I prick you forward in this commendable art: and so, I hope, that this whetstone will make your blunt wits somewhat sharper: gold is not put in the fire to be consumed, but to be purified; even so I hope, the travel which I have taken herein will not make you to prove worse, but rather somewhat the better in all goodness.

FINIS

My farewell to Plymouth.

Most noble *Plymouth*, the great love which I found in thee amongst both rich and poor, now draws me back again to give thee a kind and hearty farewell, and yet at this time I yield but only thanks as my paymistress, but yet I desire not to die indebted, without making some better recompense to some of my chiefest well-willers and friends, if my ability proves answerable to my mind: for a Christmas banquet may be requited at Easter, and so when I am better able I will make amends; but yet me thinks I should not leave so famous a town with such a threadbare farewell, but here may a question arise of those which know it not, why it should be more famous than any other town? Which I will tell thee, set her wealth and riches aside, yet for that only not the like town in this land of her bigness, I mean so long as the wars continued, she is also famous for her strong fortification, but more famous for her entertainment; for twenty thousand strangers have had upon a sudden good and sufficient lodging, and other necessaries; yea, whether they have had money, or not, but most famous of all for her gallant harbors, for a thousand ships may safely ride, and all within half a league of the town; it is the chief arriving place for all the South and West Countries: and in a word, the only Key of *England*. In the time of wars *Plymouth* flowed, as it were, with milk and honey, and then it flourished

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with gallant's great store, tracing the streets so thick in swarms like as at *Westminster* in a term time, and although many of them went away without bidding thee farewell; yet I will, as it were, bite thee by the finger, because thou shall remember me, for if it is not possible for the mother to forget her child, then (without all peradventure) I shall never forget thee: Once thou were a golden place, but now an iron or a leaden town, I mean, in a manner turned upside down, which makes me sorry, and many more; but yet be of good cheer, for after a storm comes a calm: pluck up thy heart, and let it not grieve thee to see a king content with his kingdom; for if it were not so, it should be so.

Although of late thy purse has had a strong purgation, which makes some of you to shrink up the shoulders like a Spaniard, and hang down the head like a bulrush, and repenting yourselves, that you had not kept the goods better which you got in time of war; and this me thinks I hear some of you say yourselves: Oh what a fool was I that took not time by the forelock before he did pass away, but must now catch at her bald pate, where is nothing to hold by: let it not grieve thee, for if thou had those goods again, they would consume like butter against the Sun: for as it is not possible to keep the Indian beef sweet two days, with all the salt in the world, no more are the goods got by the wars to be of any continuance, no although a man had them that were as wise as wit could make them, but it seldom comes into such men's hands, but rather unto such as resemble *Rufus* the ruffian which had God pictured on the inside of his target, and the devil on

[folio Ff recto]
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the outside, with this poesy on the inside, *If thou will not have me, the other shall*: as not caring whether he went to God or the devil: many such fellows attend upon the fortune of the wars, making havoc and spoil, and many times murdering those that never meant hurt unto them nor their king for whom they fight: for yet such, as I say, make no conscience, but as the proverb goes, rob *Peter* and pay *Paul*, accounting all fish which come to the net, getting it by hook or by crook, some out of *Judas*' bag, and some out of the devil's budget: for I have seen a man of war, as hungry upon a poor fisherman, as they would be on a caroché,⁴⁹ as those that have seen men of war, have seen how unconscionably *Rufus* the ruffian and his fellows have dealt with those poor fishermen whose whole estate, for maintenance both for their wives, and children, did rely upon the gains, which the poor men by great pains did get with their boat, yet so hardhearted have these men of war been unto those poor fishers, that neither for the tears of the old men, which for grief would beat their heads against the ship's side, yet neither this nor the pitiful complaint of the young men, for all their yielding and kneeling, yet would they take away their fish, their meat and drink, and their clothes from their backs, their sails from their yards, yet not so contented, but in the end set them ashore, and either sink their boat or burn him aboard the man of war, to the utter undoing of many a poor man; now judge whether it is possible, that these goods so gotten can prosper, for they are gotten with no better a conscience than a strumpet gets her money; and therefore it will prosper no better: for look

⁴⁹ A luxurious coach or carriage.

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what a strumpet gets of twenty, she spends it upon one which she does love and affect above all the rest: even so, many soldiers and men of war, what spoils they get, they are not long in spending of it: but as the proverb goes, light come, and light go: ill got, and wickedly spent: for they put it into a bottomless bag, which never holds thrift long.

Lo, thus my opinion you have heard, and I yield up my verdict thus, that the goods which are gotten by the wars, are ill gotten: and he which has but one penny's worth of ill gotten goods in his house, God will send a curse upon all the rest: then let us pray for peace, rather than war, and every man learn to labor with his hands, to maintain spending: wherefore, set thy wits and thy hands to labor, and turn over the leaf; I mean, learn a new lesson, for look what is gotten with labor, will be spent with discretion, or else kept with wariness; and so I greet not only *Plymouth* alone, but all Devonshire and Cornwall, with as many kind commendations, as it is possible for my pen to express, and all I protest with true love from my heart, and so I leave you, with a thousand farewells to you all.

Your ever-loving friend,

Joseph Swetnam.

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The author's conclusion.

Now (gentle reader) I do entreat thee to bear with my rudeness, I am no scholar, for I do protest I never went to school six months in all my life, nor I never did write one line of this book by the direction of any other teacher; nor did I ever ask the opinion of any other professor, since the time that I was first taught, and that was when I was young; and then I had some of my skill in *London*, and some in other places, where it was my chance to travel. Again, I did write this book by piecemeal; for after I first began, I left off writing a week, and sometimes a month together, before I wrote again; and so forgetting oftentimes what I had written before. Again, some chief notes I have left out, which I thought I had written of before: wherefore they shall follow in my second book. Now (gentle reader) for thy benefit I have begun, if there are any others that find fault, and cannot amend it, let them judge of their wit that hear them talk: but if I shall hear those myself speak against this book which do not go about to amend it, then if they were as good as *George a Greene*,⁵⁰ yet would I not be feared with deeds, much less with words, but will answer them, not only with words, but with weapons, for this book was printed in haste, at the earnest request of some friends of mine. Also I wrote it to profit those that cannot come where teachers are: and again, there are few which teach this art

⁵⁰ George a Greene was a popular literary hero, perhaps most famous from the tale *The Jolly Pinner of Wakefield*, and at one point was even incorporated into the Robin Hood mythos. Though not of high birth, he is depicted as a virtuous character, loyal and honest.

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that do travel, the reason is, as I think, they are little set by when they come into the country amongst you: now it is not enough to have this book in thy pocket, but to exercise thy body withal, that thereby thou may have the perfect skill thereof in thy head, and so praying thee to excuse me in the gross penning of it, and bear with me a little the rather in that I was never scholar, as I said before, and as it plainly appears by the gross penning of it, but my folly herein shall be upon my head, yet I pray thee let it pass a little the rather, and give it your good word, for because I have taken pains in hope to do thee good, but not for any gain (I protest before God) but only because I know it so laudable an exercise, and more commendable than any other, we see daily these books scoffed at, which were made by learned and good scholars, for if there were one which excelled ten thousand, yet every one will not speak well of him, but he shall have in spite of his teeth backbiters and faultfinders, much more myself being the least of ten thousand must not stab everyone which will speak in discommendations, both of me and my book, but if I may escape handsomely from scoffs and mocks of such idiots which are usually condemners of such laudable exercises: then I accompt that I have made a good hand.

For herein I have shown but my own opinion and judgment in setting out this book, now I do not say it is other men's opinions: for none but myself was counsel, nor had any hand in this matter; therefore I make no question that other men are of other minds, yet observing these rules, and bearing

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these lessons in memory, they may serve thy turn as well as they have served mine all the days of my life hitherto: but yet believe what you list of it, and leave what you like not, now if in my good intention and true meaning I am undeservedly wronged, I think it will be by none but such pot-companions which cudgel their wits and beat their brains to shift for money to that use which oftentimes makes the son so hardy as to call his father knave, or worse.

Now if my book does come unto the view of any such, I will impute it unto the idleness of their brain, or unto the spitefulness of an envious mind, which will never commend nor allow any other man's manhood, opinion or judgment to be so good as their own, not much like unto the proud Pharisee, who said that his life in all respects was better than any other, now mistake me not, for I do not say so, because you should think that this work cannot be mended, for it is far from my thought to think that this book is so well penned as to be without fault, or to please all, neither is it so well as it might have been, if my leisure would have served me to amend some faults which I know in it myself, indeed, I must confess that there are many in this land of this noble and worthy art besides myself, which might have taken this matter in hand, because many of them are more fit both for wisdom and learning, but I see they have not gone about it, wherefore if any blame me for showing my good will, I hope those which have known me and seen my behavior will answer for me with reasonable speech

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against those which object against me: no, if reason will not rule them, but like *Balaam's* ass, will strive against weapons, then I pray you refer the quarrel unto myself, and let me answer my own wrong which I have done them herein, for I had rather lose my life in defense of my reputation and credit, if there were such a danger in fighting, then my friend should lose one drop of blood in my quarrel: therefore while I am living, wrong me not, for he which fights for another, seeks his own destruction, so praying you if I have offended any, let me answer it myself while I am living, for when I am dead he deals unchristianlike, that will abuse me: and so I rest,

Thine ever to help thee hereafter in what I may,

Thy friend,

JOSEPH SWETNAM.