

# *THE FREE MASTER OF WEAPONS*

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*COMPOSED BY CHARLES BESNARD*

TRANSLATED BY ROB RUNACRES AND REINIER VAN NOORT

## Acknowledgements

Translation from a draft transcription of the original manuscript by Ju Garry, and from a scan of the original document, which may be found here:

<http://ardamhe.free.fr/biblio/besnard/>.

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## References

Cotsgrave, R. 1611 *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*

## Translators' Note

This is a draft translation of Part One of Charles Besnard's treatise, *Le Maistre D'Arme Liberal*, published in 1653. The translators intend to publish the full work, including a transcription and modernisation of the French, once translation of part 2 has been completed.

Italics have been used where the original French has been retained, for example in the guards *seconde*, *tierce* and *quarte*. Where applicable, Italian fencing terminology has been used to explain certain actions; a full glossary will be provided in the final translation. Where English has been added to clarify, the words have been placed in square brackets.

Any errors are the translators' own.

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## THE FREE MASTER OF WEAPONS

TREATISE OF THE THEORY of the art and practice of the single sword or the foil, and everything that can be done and subtly practised there, with principle figures and postures intaglio.

*Containing also several other moralities on this topic.*

Made and composed by CHARLES BESNARD, native of Breton, inhabitant of the city of Rennes, and demonstrating there the aforementioned practice.

Dedicated to our Lords of the Estates of the Province and Duchy of Brittany.

In Rennes, by Julien Herbert, Bookseller and Printer, Rue S.Germain, illustrated by S. Julien

M.DC.LIII.

With the privilege of the King.

TO OUR LORDS OF THE ESTATES OF THE PROVINCE AND DUCHY OF  
BRETAGNE.

My Lords,

No-one can ignore that our Illustrious Armorica has always been a rich nursery and noble nurse of the greatest men of arms, who have, on the most important occasions, appeared in this grand kingdom and in the Foreign Wars. And as we are the Children of these Illustrious Heroes, we have a close obligation to be the heirs of their virtues and their courage, because we are from their victories and the sweet fruits of their triumphs. Therefore, in this little work I am doing my best to gather the main principles of instruction and of virtue that must be followed, and the vices and defects that must be escaped, to imitate them and make us worthy successors of our victorious ancestors, to keep in our age, and to transfer to our posterity the titles of honour that they have [given] to us successively, from century to century until acquired and conserved by us. And as I started this little work with a zeal to maintain and increase (to my power) the glory of this Province, of which I call you the Fathers and the Conservators: so you will have it, if you like (my lords), all the more enjoyable, because it has come from one who is obliged to you by right of birth, to contribute to the honour of the country, promising that your illustrious name, placed on the front of this small Treatise, will render it not only more pleasant, but also that it [your name] will serve as a defence against troublemakers, and provide a safe-conduct to pass it through the hands of individuals, and in the centuries to come, which is in effect one of my greatest desires, the other is to say (with respect)

My Lords,

Your very humble, very obedient, and very faithful servant and subject of the Province of Bretagne,

CHARLES BESNARD.

## TO THE READER

TO MY READER, while ordinarily one passes over the prefaces and opinions that one is accustomed to put at the beginning of books, so to move first to the matter, I cannot refrain, however, from giving you this warning, which I believe absolutely necessary, both for your own satisfaction as for my particular interest, which obliges me to beg you to excuse the barbarity of some words, which are neither used [in] nor absolutely French, but which I have nevertheless usurped because they seem to me more expressive and more relevant to the matter with which I deal. Besides, I beg you to believe that, not being informed by the wisdom and knowledge that my profession and experience could have given me, I cannot conduct a work to perfection, with so much economy and schooling, as a man who has lived all his life in the study and in the office. You will oblige me extremely by not censoring my work with such rigour and severity as you would do of a man who has been elevated and nurtured in the Schools, and from whom you would expect a more elaborate work, and be assured that I will be rewarded for their vigil too if my work can pass for mediocre in your judgement. Farewell.

Excerpt from the Privilege of the King.

By grace and privilege of the King in Paris, on the sixteenth of September in the year of our Lord 1653, and the eleventh of our reign. Signed by the King's Counsellor, CHASSEBRAS, and sealed with the Great Seal of yellow wax: It is permissible for CHARLES BESNARD, inhabitant of the city of Rennes, to print a book titled, The Free Master of Arms, etc., for the period of five years. And very express inhibitions and interdictions are made to all Printers, Booksellers and others of any quality and conditions as they are, to print or have printed, sell or distribute said book during said time without the consent of the Exhibitor or their successors, on the penalty of three thousand pounds and forfeiture of copies. For such is our pleasure, to charge him before putting them for sale, to place two copies in our public library, and one in that of our very dear and trusty Sieur Moley, Knight, and Keeper of the Seals of France. These letters are to be held to have been duly served, as is more fully stated with said privilege.

*Imprint October 25, 1653.*

Copies have been provided.

# THE FREE MASTER OF ARMS

## CHAPTER I

*In which are treated the principles of the Art and Exercise of the Single Sword or Foil, and of how one must be placed in guard and in posture with proportion.*

To properly place oneself in guard and posture in order to practice the single sword or foil, one must first place the sword or foil in hand so that the thumb is placed on the cross or flat of the sword, and the index finger under the flat of the same in a half circle, and right under the thumb. Then tighten the grip of the three other fingers, and afterwards place oneself in this fashion:

It is necessary to present the body in profile before one's opponent, placing the left foot behind and across, placing the back of the knee and left side of the groin, in such a form that the point of the shoulder in descending covers in a straight line the tip of the knee; and the tip of the knee, the tip of the foot. One must hold the left arm in a circle and the hand up and free, the reverse of which is turned towards his opponent, and placed at the height and line of the ear or left eye, and the whole body is balanced and supported on the left foot without any constraint.

One must present the right side, and also hold this straight without any bends, from the shoulder to the foot, the tip of which foot must be turned forward towards one's opponent, the heel on the same line as the ankle of the left foot: that the right arm (the hand of which is holding the sword in the manner as has been said) is also extended forward, but ensure that it is ever so slightly bent, to have greater freedom: that the wrist with the hilt of the sword is held and situated straight above the toes, and not next to [them] or to the outside or to the inside.

Finally, to be well [placed] in guard and posture with proportion, it is necessary that these mathematical rules are met there.

Namely, that the two tips of the feet with the heels make a true angle.

That there are two forms and figures of angles that are, namely, the one by the bend of the knee between the heel and the point of the buttock, and the other by the bend of the groin between the point of the shoulder and the left knee.

It is also important that these three perpendicular lines are kept and observed, so that one could, with a lead at the end of a string which is used by Architects, place the line against the back of the tip of the left shoulder, [and] let the lead down, so that the ankle of the foot, [and] the outside of the leg and thigh, also touch said line.

Similarly, putting the same line from the front edge of the shoulder, down to the tip of the left foot, it must be that the points of the foot, the knee and the shoulder, also touch said line.

And whatever the side to be bent and shortened, it must be, however, that the right side (as has been said) is kept straight without any bends, and that this line still gives this proportion, namely, having the foot advanced. To step, carry the right foot behind the left, and the left behind the right, observing always the same distance, proportion and angles in your steps, both in advancing and retreating.

The last way is called closing the measure, which one makes after the above-mentioned steps, where when one sees oneself near to or not far from measure; and to do so, one must lift and advance the right foot forward, following it with the left foot, as many times as you like, until you are in measure, always carrying the right foot first, without removing the body from the above postures, and in so doing you will always have the strength and freedom to attack and defend.

And if your opponent presses you when closing the measure, so you are not premature and so that you choose the tempo or the counters, to adapt to him, you will break the measure by releasing the foot in this way, namely, by retiring carefully, lift the left foot and carry it back, and at the same time that you place it, draw your right foot in, and thus continue as many times as you judge to your convenience, still carrying the left foot back first and, in the same distance that it covers, you will draw your right foot; and by this way you will always be strong and free to make such tempo and counters as you like.

*The tempi, same tempi, counter-tempi, and counter to counter.*

It is necessary to explain that in wanting to say these terms of tempo, same tempo, counter-tempo, and counter to counter, [you must] consider that there are many who take sable for fox, and that instead of saying that they are hit at the same tempo, talk of counter-tempo, which is a very great ignorance (as will be seen) and causes many arguments in our Salles.

These four terms are used to discern and distinguish the movements of the body, wrist, sword, foot, *bottes* and parries.

And to begin with the first, and to make this term of tempo understood, it is that it is impossible to make any action, fast and prompt as it may be, if there is not a tempo to do this, for example, to thrust a *botte* as fast and as quick as one can imagine, disengage, parry, advance, or retire; all this cannot be done without a tempo. And this is what we call tempo.

*Of the same tempo.*

The word of tempo then invokes all others, expected that by making a tempo at your opponent, for example by striking him with a *botte*, is it not true that in the same moment that you throw against him, he can do the same onto you? Which happens quite often, and is called the same tempo, because the blows go together and having both been given, it must be said that they were hit in the same time, and not to say [in] counter tempo.

*Of the counter tempo.*

The counter tempo is so named, because it is contrary to and the antidote of tempo, and thus being the remedy thereof. All those who speak of the counter-tempo when two opponents are hit, instead of speaking of the same tempo, speak without knowledge: that all who take the counter tempo well at the right time, never receive the blow of tempo: this I will make more clear in the Theory of this Exercise.

*Of counter to counter.*

Even as the counter-tempo is opposed and contrary to tempo, so the counter of the counter is opposed to the "counter-tempo". The term signifies only just enough, that is to say, the counter to that which is the counter to tempo.

And following these rules, one can say with truth that there is no man who can boast of having an assured blow, because if he takes the counter to the plan of his opponent, his opponent can still take the counter to his own, and thus one to the other into infinity, but any man who knows well to keep and observe its rules, will always fell his opponent with these traps, if he [the opponent] is less knowledgeable than him.

*Of the four guards.*

One should know that all the art and exercise of the sword is founded on four principles or general rules, without which there are neither adroit nor clumsy who can strike or extend any *botte*, which is not one of these four but with a great difference: the skilled know how to practice them with order, never making one instead of the other; and the clumsy use them by accident without knowledge, and more often in reverse. These four rules are called the four guards, namely, *première*, *seconde*, *tierce* and *quarte*; their names are used to distinguish the *bottes* from each other, along with the body postures that must be made in making them.

### *The blows or bottes of Première.*

The *bottes* of *première* are carried and plunged downward, namely, with the arm outstretched and the wrist higher than the head. The tip of the sword is also high, and is lowered by a movement of the wrist, thrusting the *botte* from high to low: the skilful use this *botte* very rarely, since this posture is too dangerous, having the body uncovered, and difficult to maintain: and to understand why it is called *première*, it is for use of the other three. You must make it by placing the sword in hand, and drawing it from the side sheath, you must raise the arm and the wrist high along with the sword and the point thereof, and when it is used, it is necessary that your opponent be close enough to pierce him from high to low, which is why when wanting to put the sword in hand, you must put it there outside of the measure of your opponent, specifically so that you see he has the sword in hand before him, so that he cannot pierce you on this tempo.

### *The manner of striking in Quarte with the rule of the knowledge of measure*

The *botte* of *quarte* extends and thrusts in this manner, namely, that when you see an opening on the inside of your opponent's sword, you will close and place yourself in measure. But so that you are not mistaken in recognizing the true measure of all the *bottes* you thrust, you must know this rule, which is infallible, which is that you will close the measure until you can reach with the half-forte and true edge of your sword to the foible of his own, that is to say the middle of your sword to the tip, without leaving one's posture. And when you can touch and engage his sword's foible with the true edge and half-forte of yours, you will be in measure. And all in one tempo thrust and extend your *botte*, deploying the left side, stretching out the arm and carrying the right forward, gliding with the forte and true edge of your sword on the foible of his, turning your wrist, ensuring that the fingernails are upwards and turned towards the heavens. And in doing so throw the left arm back over the hip, and to better extend and stretch this *botte* the body must be extended forward by thrusting it in this position, namely, that the calf and right groin are bent in such a way that the tip of the shoulder is found advanced to the line of the tip of the knee, and the knee to the line of the tip of the right foot, so that by placing again our perpendicular line down from the point of the shoulder, it must be that the points of the knee and of the foot touch [it] equally. The pommel of the sword is at the height of the chin, that the tips of the foot, of the knee and of the right shoulder follow straightly the point of the sword, and are covered by the forte and true edge of it, the left side is well extended, that the heel is held with all the foot firmly against the ground, but lying and turned on the inside. That the left shoulder is cleared with the arm behind and covered by the right, that the right hip is then also covered by the tip of the knee. That the head and neck are kept straight and in liberty, but taken a little behind the right shoulder, watching and leading with a bold eye, and to adjust the tip of your sword without hesitation, and to give in the nearest and uncovered part that your

opponent will give you, as if you were shooting a pistol. And while all these postures have been long to describe and to read, this does not mean that they are not be made all together and in one instant when thrusting this *botte*.

Having observed one must not fear that the tip of your opponent's sword can reach you, since the forte and true edge of yours covers the whole body, being in the aforesaid posture, and pushing the foible of your opponent's sword before you, and keeping it away from the inside, in such a way that it is impossible that he can touch you, and likewise when he would strike you also [with] his *botte* in *quarte* in the same tempo, you cannot touch each other, because each forte throws and diverts each foible.

Having extended this *botte* in *quarte*, you bring back the body, all in one tempo to guard, putting each part of it in the place, form and figure as they were, holding yourself still well covered with the forte and true edge of your sword, with a firm wrist, to be ready to parry or take the counter, should your opponent thrust you, or resume and extend another *botte* as soon as you see a proper opening.

#### *Of the Botte of Tierce*

The *botte* of *tierce* is struck to the outside and above the sword of one's adversary, which will be struck in this way, namely, when your opponent gives you an opening to the outside and above his sword, you will tighten the measure in the manner stated above, and as soon as you can touch and engage his sword to the outside with the half-forte and true edge of yours to the foible of his, hold the wrist turned so that the fingernails are also turned towards the ground, and in this way you will thrust in one tempo your *botte* in *tierce*, along the foible of his, in a straight line without raising or lowering the wrist, extending the body with all its parts advanced, as we have said, for striking the *botte* of *quarte*, and there is no difference except that there is no need to clear the shoulder and left arm, or throw the head to the rear or the right shoulder, like in that of *quarte*: and instead of having nails up, one must have turned them towards the earth in striking the *tierce*: and in so doing the forte and true edge of your sword make the same effects, and you hold the body similarly covered and in safety as in extending the *botte* of *quarte*.

Having extended and struck your *botte* in *tierce*, and adjusted your sword's foible to your opponent's body, and over the hilt of his sword, in the closest part, you retire and return to guard, still holding your arm firmly forward without any shortening, also holding the half-forte and true edge of your sword turned towards the foible of that of your opponent: and whatever disengagement that he makes, you must always present your true edge towards his foible, doing that by turning the wrist, to keep the whole body covered by the forte and true edge of your sword, and being strong and free to parry and riposte: this word 'riposte' means to strike a blow after having parried.

### *Of the Botte of Seconde*

The *seconde* is struck in two ways, namely from *tierce* to *seconde*, and from *quarte* to *seconde*, but both are the same thing, because they always strike to the inside of the sword, and the only difference which a disengagement makes is that it is made from the outside to the inside, which you will make when your opponent holds his guard high, that is to say his foible being high by sloping to the outside of your right shoulder, showing that his flank and the underneath are entirely uncovered. You, being placed in measure, will engage underneath the foible of the sword by the half-forte and true edge of yours, having the wrist turned in *tierce*, fingernails towards the earth, and in one tempo by the movement of the wrist, disengage your sword from the outside to the inside, and strike below, you extending the body forward, keeping the proportions as said above, but there is this difference in striking this *botte* in *seconde*, contrary to the previous two, which derives from the position of the wrist in the straight line, and this *seconde* in an angled and oblique line (that some call 'caver' [*cavazione*]) because by pushing it you carry the wrist as far as is possible to the outside, turning the wrist so that the nail of the thumb is turned towards the ground, and in this way the false edge of your sword will be turned towards your opponent's sword and then you should lower the body as low as possible, so that the inside of the tip of the right shoulder becomes joined (if it is possible) on the knee, together with the left hand on the ground, to support oneself more easily, to lower and raise the body, and also lowering the left shoulder inside with the neck and head held on the tip of this, watching and following with the eye the point of one's sword to adjust it well to the exposed part, and to avoid that of one's opponent, and it is necessary that all these postures are made together and in an instant, in thrusting the *seconde*, which takes, as I have said, the oblique angle: because it meets a form and figure of an angle and the wrist must be held at the height of the shoulder, and carry the points of the foot and knee straight to one's opponent, and in the same form as thrusting other *bottes*. Seeing the two perpendicular lines of the second figure, you will find the same distance between them as between the two other postures of the *quarte*.

Having thrust this *seconde* in the aforesaid manner, you will return all of one tempo in guard, still holding the most cover possible with the forte and true edge of your sword.

The *botte* of *quarte* in *seconde* is similar to the previous one, except that it has no point of disengagement to make, from which you will use the same tempo as your opponent [when he] will go to engage your sword on the inside in *quarte*, at the same instant that he crosses your sword's foible with the half-forte and true edge of his own, you will turn your wrist and extend in *seconde* in the form and figure we have said, and be sure that you drop as low as possible, so that your opponent cannot hit you: Which is nonetheless very difficult, expecting that in engaging or in parrying the foible with his

forte, he removes in so doing the tip of sword from in front of you, and he cannot offend you during the instant that you extend this *seconde*, but after you should be ready to withdraw and return to guard, or pass with the left foot on him, especially as your forte and true edge do not cover you nor serve you in this position at all.

Here is the description and true rules which you need to know and observe, in extending the *bottes* of *seconde*, *tierce*, *quarte* and *première*, and whoever makes the counter, reverses and destroys the perfection and safety that can be found and experienced in this exercise, wherein you must not find nor invent other rules nor fashionable *bottes*, because it would abuse and mock people and itself, provided that the exercise of the sword alone is now (whatever abundant of the greater share of men) in such perfection, that there can be found nothing new, any more than to go on a long plank which crosses a river, where the surest is to walk straight ahead like others who have passed before, and where all those who want to make other steps will be in great danger of falling down, along with all who imitate them.

*That it is not enough to just know the principles.*

It is not enough to know how to strike and extend in *première*, *seconde*, *tierce* and *quarte*, nor to observe the postures and movements of the body, and generally everything that I have written and taught before. All these are only the principles and foundations that one must entirely and of necessity know, for after achieving the science and knowledge of which we may find the subtlest in this exercise to put one's designs into execution, both in attacking and defending, as to maintain and keep from falling into shipwrecks and precipices which are met there. These are things worthy enough to bid all those who want to make a profession of honour and to carry the sword, to on it employ time, and work, and their spirits, as then they make fewer mistakes to lose property, honour, life and often the souls along with the peace of the families.

Notwithstanding this, the youth has never been less curious to learn about the conduct of this noble exercise than today: and yet one has never seen so many quarrels, duels, fighting and killing than at present, for which one of main causes is that this youth has no fear nor apprehension of what it has never learned, seen, heard or known, of anything that could kill them. That is why walking like the blind, they throw themselves recklessly into these precipices, believing that they are beautiful ways to go to glory, from which they do not have the means nor the way to withdraw, and they thus perish there miserably.

Because it is a very remarkable thing that the largest part of all those who have less knowledge and experience of arms, are the most quarrelsome, seditious and foolhardy, and who usually fear danger the least, because (as the proverb said) a wise man doubts everything, and the ignorant doubts nothing and finds no difficulty.

So we see every day in our Salles, all those who have no other science than some few little foundations and principles, who know to extend the *bottes* of *quarte*, *tierce* and *seconde*, to parry, riposte, make some beats and disengage the sword, to be those who believe themselves as able, expert and skilled as the most skilful, especially as they saw and considered that all the greatest Masters in this exercise have no other posture nor develop *bottes* other than theirs, because they do not consider and are unaware of all the science with the subtleties, executed through its foundation and principle, which is either the *quarte*, *tierce*, *seconde* or *première*, and that to know and to have their principles and foundations, they do not know, nevertheless, any science that there is then, and by not knowing, they are all the same as those who walk without light, who believing to know the way very well, and going boldly as if they see clearly, go astray, fall and break their neck in some ignored and unforeseen precipice.

*Of the heart without skill.*

But it seems to me that I have already heard some of these truculent personages who say 'by the death and by the head, that I may have many beauties', and that there is a great difference between a button of a foil and the point of a sword, and that we see often the unskilled have the advantage over those who made wonders with the foil in a Salle, and that one does not observe the sword in his hand while I am teaching, and finally that there is no need of instruction, and that one should only have the heart and the valour to vanquish and overcome all the skilled who do not.

I still agree with them, in what they call heart, which vanquishes those who have none, no matter how skilled they are.

But it is opportune to know the cause which produces this effect, to achieve that one must know what part of the body to make act, govern and conduct this skill with all the subtleties contained therein.

If someone said that it is the heart, I will say no (regardless that it is this that drives all the other parts), and that all men have heart also according to their proportion, and that we often see the smallest defeating the largest, and so it cannot be.

I argue that the heart does not guide nor conduct in any way the instruction, and that it is the eye and the judgement; the eye is the sentinel who discovers the enemy and the dangers, who shall give notice to the driver (which is the judgement), who, as a good captain, as soon as he is informed, puts to order and ranks all his soldiers, who are the [body's] members, each in his station, to be ready to obey and execute all his commands. But this judgement is not shared equally by men, either in quantity or in quality, some having more, some less, some more strong, the others less, and this is what causes men to not learn the one from the other, but one who has a good and strong judgement does wonders in the conduct of everything he undertakes.

*How the intemperance of the four humours of which the body of man is composed makes the judgement lost by the two extremities that are fear and timidity, and anger and overconfidence.*

Or the reason why a man without skill, for whom the heart does not fail, but rather the judgement, often wins the advantage with the sword in hand, over another who beat him with a foil a hundred [times] in succession.

It is that this clever man by the foil has no fear or apprehension, knowing that there is no peril, and by this means possesses his entire judgement which guides him in this exercise and which makes him do wonders: but then it occurs that he must play in earnest, and that he must put the sword in the hand to defend himself, and then the sentry comes to tell his pilot and captain that he sees the enemy armed and raging for the fight. In this view, this poor pilot commands his soldiers that everyone takes on his duty, and is prepared to execute his orders. The soldiers who having received this order, each prepare to do well. But in doing so, there sometimes arrive quarrels and sedition between four of these rogues, who are perpetually at war as to whom will carry the superiority over one another, who, coming to be stirred up and heated against each other, and after mingling, fight, jostle, and run here and there, by their mutiny put all their comrades in disorder. The poor pilot, for their good, cries, 'calm yourselves, return', but they do not obey, and the more he asks them, and tells them that the enemy approaches, the more they are obstinate. Finally, after running everywhere, they come to find the cabin door of their poor pilot open, and through this they go inside, where they continue their disorder with such fury, that finally this poor pilot is forced to abandon and leave his seat and rudder.

After which, the enemy arrives and boards this vessel full of disorder and without guidance, seeing there some useless weapons not employed, and which in this way cannot harm him; in such a way to render him the master without risk.

And here is the cause that makes a man without skill, whose heart, or better put, the judgement, never fails to prevail in advantage of the sword in hand over a man with skill, who in this meeting and occasion loses the heart and judgement by accident, from the intemperance and disorder of his four soldiers, who are the four humours of which the human body is composed, and which are of qualities unequal and contrary to each other, namely, the cold and the hot, the dry and the wet. However those who want to know more specific reasons, they are directed to doctors, this being their science and not mine.

But I will say in conclusion, that these people who have heart without skill have no need to boast about such victories, having won them over sick people, [who] fall swooning by the vapours which have risen in the brain, which render them without movement, and

unable to defend themselves. And they [those without skill] are wrong and greatly mistaken to say that there is no need for skill, because he must still agree with me that the Art helps wonderfully the nature and that skill does not destroy or impair any heart and generosity of the man, on the contrary it supports, leads, strengthens and greatly increases them.

*That anger and overconfidence removes also the judgement and instruction to the man.*

But I can still hear some of these gentlemen who say that it is not only of these skilful of which we have spoken they hear, but also those who showed their skill and courage in many battles of which they took the advantage, and after all they often perish and not the clumsy.

I agree with you, but that happens to them by accident also, and they die from another cause quite contrary to that of which we have spoken, which is opposed one to the other by two extremities, as are too much and too little: because the instruction of the first is lost by fear and dread, which proceed from an abundance of wet and cold humours, which yearn to freeze the heart and the blood in the veins, making lost the judgement, and rendering the man without movement and unable to defend himself: and [there are] those who lose their skill by anger and rage, which come from an abundance of blood and dryness, which produce a heat so great at the slightest emotion that the whole body is full of that fire and flame, sending so much smoke of vanity and overconfidence into the brain that the judgement and all reason are smothered by it, so that a man being led by the boiling heat which produces fumes of arrogance and contempt is made clumsy and wants to fight for some lowly subject. Whereby running to this battle with haste without orders, without fear or apprehension, or without thinking of his conservation or considering, as blind as he is that the sword of that maladroitness pierces as well as his own, seeing himself attacked and in inevitable peril, he resolves to play double or quits: and making a virtue of necessity, assembles all his strength and power to the preservation of his person, which seeing himself reduced to the extremity, makes prodigious efforts to miraculously extricate himself from all which inconveniences him. All these parts united and collected with the judgement, which is also called to his aid the sovereign power which is above all human skill, who attends always the right, preserves the innocent and chastises the insolent, and makes that the most skilful and generous that can be, has not killed a fly against the wishes of the latter. Furthermore he does not think that one must not play with a clumsy fellow with the sword in hand, who never gives any quarter to his opponent when he has the advantage: especially as he does not know the point of expedience nor more certain means to get out of danger, than to kill him: and not thinking of all these accidents, judging that the unskilled are unable to hurt him, and indignant with his anger, thinking that he must slice the mountains, and split the rocks at a glance, goes carried by anger

and rage, thrusting and lunging, and by perceiving without judgement or conduct, it happens to him by misfortune to slip and fall, or else his *botte* is parried by chance by this maladroit, struggling with the arms and with his sword, to traverse indiscriminately as a demon, and in doing so will be thrown headlong over, will be pierced and killed miserably, and then one says ha! that arms are mundane, which is still an old fancy and way of speaking, because the weapons are still able to offend today as yesterday, but men are not the same, not always being in such a constitution and disposition to execute their designs, on a day like any other, and this still comes from the four elements, which are by their mutation that man is sometimes joyful, gallant, active, merry and strong, and sometimes sad, melancholy, vexed, burdened and sluggish: and therefore it must be said that men are common and not the weapons, and conclude that the skilful perish by accident and by their sins, and being carried away by anger, vanity, arrogance and presumption that disorder all their senses and brain, making them lose all reason and judgement, that by this means makes them much more clumsy than the unskilled, and hence it is not true to say that the unskilful have defeated the cunning, who on this occasion have only the name and not the effect.

Therefore I advise all those who want to wear the sword, both in the king's service and to maintain their person, and to repel force by force, Firstly.

To make themselves more skilful in this exercise, and to do this using time and continual labour, with full attention, to accustom the body to understand well, to extend, to retire, to bend, to stoop, to retreat with agility, strength and swiftness, watching with judgement all the tempo, counter tempo and counters of counters, following the order and manner that I hope to write below, which would be much easier for me to make understood and to explain with the foil and plastron, than by the discourse and pen.

Secondly, after having acquired the instruction, he must maintain it by exercise with the foil, as often as possible, though it be by thrusting against a wall in order to maintain the body and wrist in vigour and quickness, which lacking this, rusts, goes numb and unwieldy in such a way, that [even] the most skilful that can be found, if he is two years or just one year without any exercise, he can be sure that a student of six months can beat him with foil, as can be seen quite often. This is why to prevent rusting, it is necessary to assault with the foil, as often as one can, and not follow the opinion of some Cavaliers of this time, which is that after they have done their exercise, and having returned, they never want to talk about it or to teach their play and designs to others, although I think it is more the fear of showing their false and evil skill, because one must know and understand that nothing can be hidden in this exercise from a very clever man, who by art and experience, knows about the intentions of his opponent, and renders them useless, and uses them for himself to his own advantage.

Third, beware of getting carried away with one or the other of these two extremes we have just mentioned, namely, too much fear and apprehension, and anger,

overconfidence and arrogance, which are passions that cause great disorders to men, causing them to lose all reason and judgement: and in so doing strips them of all their knowledge and skill, and finally renders them to a number of brutes. To do well in this exercise, we must keep in the middle, which is to not be too timid, nor to rely too much on courage and skill, seeing (as they say) that suspicion is the mother of safety, and that with the sword in the hand you rarely make a mistake twice.

But to keep to the middle depends on natural gifts and good constitution, and proportion of the parts that compose it, with the guidance of reason.

Also, we see by experience, that all those who were, and still are now, and who pass over the common for skilful, brave and generous, are of good constitution, happy, rested and of a good humour, who are not fearful nor angry, and one never sees or very rarely them fight for their own quarrel and cause, because the skill they have comes from the strength and power of their judgement and all those who have a good and strong judgement, do not undertake anything that does not have cause and reason, and every man who conducts himself through reason and judgement, does not want to do unto others, what he does not want others to do to him, and so never makes quarrels.

But when they have cause to put the sword in hand against someone, you will see them go there in sober and temperate blood, without passion or emotion, which appear in no way, with as much civility and courtesy as they can, and fight with as much judgement and ease as they would do with the foil. And who take far more glory and generosity in disarming their opponents than in killing them: As indeed there are many more, as are found numbers, who in all these encounters were satisfied to disarm opponents without ever having wanted to kill a single one, and who have even given life to those who would have given them the death blow.

Here is what one can call generous and heroic actions with good reason, because there is much more greatness of heart and courage to forgive an offense than to punish it. This is what all those who bear the sword, and who wish to be esteemed generous and courageous, must imitate to use in this way, and not do as many young people who, who after an infinity of ranting, of impetuosity, of quarrels and of obstinance, of bellyaching and of death, believe the earth to tremble with fear, all of which is barely able to frighten small children only, and who after all tremble with fear themselves in front of their opponents when they have to play all good, and hot and ebullient as they may have seemed at the beginning, they become cold as marble at the end, when their opponents have the patience to let pass for a little their first thrust, and endure their words, who are saying, Ha! Idiot, braggart, coward, you lack heart, you stumble, you fall: and you reply to them Yes! Yes! It is true!; but make your play, and take great care at the end of finding too much for you.

## Chapter II

*In which is treated in Theory, Art and Exercise of the Single Sword or Foil, and of all that can make it more subtle.*

To show and make understood wherein consists the perfection of the play of the single sword or foil, one must begin with the parts, to achieve by each of the latter the knowledge of all.

In the first place, one should know that all the science and subtlety contained in this exercise depends on the recognition of the movements, tempos, measures, designs and intentions of one's adversary, to render them useless for him and to use them against him.

But some might say that it is not possible to recognize and know the designs and intentions of a man.

And I reply that one easily recognises the interior by the exterior, and the cause by its effects.

One knows anger and other passions, whatever is closed within a man, by the movement of his members and his parts that one sees on the outside, either through his eyes, by his face, by his talk or walk, or by the movement of his arms and hands.

And similarly one knows in an instant the designs and intentions of a man who has the sword or foil in hand, and the science that he may have there by the hold of his guard, position of his body and sword and the movement of them.

To show this clearly, one must understand all the subtleties contained in this Art, regardless that there are an almost infinite number. Nevertheless, all of this is listed and consists of two points or parts, which are: whether you will attack, or will be attacked by your adversary; whether you will engage his sword, or he will engage yours, and finally, whether you will thrust him, or he will thrust you.

This being very constant and true I will divide this treatise into two parts. In the first, I will assume that you will attack and engage your adversary, and that you are both very skilled, and after I will explain what will be suitable for you, and must be done and observed, both in attacking and defending.

In the second part, I will turn the coin, whether/either attacking and engaging, as you have been, you will be attacked and engaged by your opponent, and you will be taught the way that you must observe and guard to defend yourself from him, and reverse his designs while executing yours.

But before going further, I must pose a question here, which will serve great understanding in studying this Treaty:

Which is to know how a man who has the sword in hand could defend himself, being in a Salle to which are four doors, one in front, the other one behind, one to the right and the other to the left, and who is very certain that his enemy will come there to attack him in order to kill him, without knowing through which.

I ask that [what should] this man do to prevent the enemy from entering, to preserve his life, and to defend himself from him.

Someone might say that he has only to close these four doors, and bar them well against him, and leave his enemy outside, who by this means could do him no wrong.

But this man remains trapped, a prisoner and captive, and he can in no way extricate himself and dispose of his enemy. So we must find a better expedient: this is the safest way, doing which this man can prevent his enemy from doing him any discomfort.

It is that you have this man close and bar well three of the four doors, and after that he guards with his sword the one which he leaves open: and when the enemy comes to enter, it will be easy to prevent him and dispose of him.

This is the same way that a man must do, who has a sword or foil in his hand, and who likewise has four doors or openings by which his adversary can strike him and give him *bottes*, namely, in *terce* or in *quarte*, either above or below his sword.

This is why it is necessary that the body is held retired, and shorten the left side on his foot, as is represented by our first position A in order to more securely guard both extremities, which would be too difficult to preserve if the body were held straight, namely, above and below the sword, that to close more securely three of the four doors and openings by the true edge, forte and half-forte of the sword, and to have greater liberty, and facility in guarding that what you leave open.

But one must ensure that in closing your three doors and openings, you also shut out (as there may be) the freedom of your opponent's sword, to compel him to fall into your trap.

And to do that and to begin our method, let us suppose that you are in a beautiful and large Salle, in which you want to make an attack and assault with your opponent with the foil, in which, after having presented him with two of proportion and of equal length, and he having taken and chosen one leaving you the other, you put yourself in one end of the Salle, and he in the other end, both straight towards each other, each holding his two feet one next to the other, the foil in the right hand, the point down to the left side, both arms held low by the sides without any artifice, after which you will make the salute in this way.

### *The Salute.*

Firstly, gently and slightly raise your right foot up, and move it away from the left foot by half a pace, and placing make that the whole body is supported thereon, and at the same time raise your wrist and foil high, in *première* guard, or *prime*, as you please.

Secondly, you will make the salute with the left foot, putting the left hand to the hat, and uncovering yourself, bringing it low to the side of the knee, the inside turned towards him, and while making this reverence you must carry the foot smoothly in rounding and turning the point thereof to the outside, carrying and removing the left side back, so that the ankle of the same foot is located behind the right heel, where placing it there you will balance your body so that it is supported thereon.

Thirdly, you will raise your right foot, carry it and place it forward, its point towards your adversary.

Fourth, you will make a step forward with the left foot, so that the ankle of that foot is located in front of the point of the right foot, replacing your hat on your head, and lowering your wrist and foil in *seconde*, without lowering the body at all.

And fifth, you will advance with the right foot and put yourself on guard and posture in the manner we have taught; and note that in making this reverence, you must not lower the head or bend the body, as in the bows of civility that one makes: on the contrary you must stand upright well, in order to look fixedly at your opponent and consider his guard and posture, in order to form the plans we wish to execute while doing this.

Many people make their salute another way: but each faces it as they see fit, because it is nothing but a small ceremony that does nothing to the foundation of this science.

After having made your salute to your opponent, which you will have similarly received, and you both being put in guard in the fifth time, you will very subtly narrow the measure while considering his guard and posture.

But you must be certain that no one can hold his guard but in one of these four ways, namely, high or low, or in the middle, who is covering himself with his sword, in *quarte* or in *tierce*, and you must not get yourself in trouble for this, expected that they are easy to engage the ones as the others, for in these four different guards, you have to make at them in each engagement: But you must have a good foot, good eye, good wrist, and good judgement, with all the dispositions of the body required to properly execute the tempi, counter-tempi, and counters to the counter, with agility, vigour and speed.

*Of the engagement of quarte.*

If your opponent holds his guard in the middle, and covers himself with his true edge, forte and half-forte of his sword on the outside, not leaving any opening except on the inside in *quarte*.

You will narrow the measure until you can touch with your half-forte and true edge of your sword the foible of his own, and putting yourself in this measure you will engage his sword's foible, with the half-forte and true edge of yours, while thus closing three of your four doors and openings, so that you do not give any opening on the outside of your sword in *tierce*.

Now holding, as it were, the sword of your opponent engaged and subjected on the inside, in *quarte*, you need to know how to overcome these four things, which are, 1. When your opponent will disengage thrusting you in *tierce*, 2. When he will disengage without thrusting you, either by making a feint, or to disengage only, 3. When he will contest against your sword, 4. When he will not move his own, that is to say he remains engaged.

If your opponent takes the tempo to disengage from the inside, thrusting you his *botte* in *tierce*, you will make him one of the counters below, whichever pleases you: namely.

1. Either you parry with the forte and true edge of your sword, by turning your wrist smoothly from *quarte* to *tierce*, while bringing in an instant your sword's foible from the inside, where it was on the outside, holding it a little high to better close this opening, and turn, and make your opponent's *botte* pass to the outside: this being done, you will riposte him and thrust in *tierce*, or in *seconde*, if he closes the opening of *tierce*, or in *quarte*, if he closes the first and the second.

2. Or you will parry with the false edge of your sword (as many people do) and afterwards thrust to the body.

3. If he thrusts you with this *botte* while forcing the foible of your sword with his forte, in such a way that you cannot divert his foible to the outside, you will use one of these three counters, namely two by yielding to force, and the other by turning [*volta*].

The first of the ways to yield to force is done thus, which is at the same time that you feel your foible forced by the half-forte of your opponent's sword while [he is] extending his *botte* in *tierce*, you let your point go low and to the inside, loosening the wrist, turning it and raising it high, so that the pommel is as high as your shoulder, turn the nails of your fingers towards your opponent's head, and in this posture will find your forte and true edge of the sword to the inside, which will find itself opposed to the foible of his, will divert it and will make it pass to the inside, without it being able to touch you at all, provided you clear your left side in doing so, and at the instant that this *botte* is finished, you will lift the foible of your sword with a movement of the wrist, thrusting your riposte

in *quarte*, where you cannot fail to find an opening: this blow is not common, although excellent.

4. The other way to yield is very good for the sword in hand, even against the left-handed, which is almost like the previous one, but with this difference, which is when he thrusts you in *tierce*, forcing as we have said, you yield with your wrist, lowering the tip of your sword down, and raise the wrist, turning it until the thumbnail is turned towards your knee, the pommel high and to the outside, and immediately you will make a turn of your sword in the form of a moulinet, turning with a movement of the wrist, smoothly raising the point from low to high, and in making this turn you will not miss meeting will not miss meeting the foible of his sword with the forte of yours, which will throw it and make it pass by in front of you without him being able to touch you, and in finishing the turn of your sword, you can with a *reverso* give a blow with the tip or *estramasson* with the true edge on the head or the arm of your opponent before he has retired or returned to guard, without which he can hardly avoid this blow, which, being properly applied, puts him in a state where he cannot do you any harm. And if you want to use this blow with the foil, instead of giving an *estramasson*, you must in achieving and finishing your turn of the foil, strike him and extend a *botte* in *quarte* over his sword's forte: these two ways to yield to force are very clean and useful to all those who do not have a strong wrist, and greatly deceive those who strike their *bottes* in *tierce* while forcing the foible with the forte, because finding no resistance, instead of adjusting the body, pass in front by very far.

5. At the same time as your opponent strikes you with this *botte* of *tierce*, turn your wrist in *quarte*, drawing and holding the point of your sword straight towards his side, below the forte of his sword, and at the same time turn [*volta*] and bend the body, turning on the right heel, a half turn to left, taking two steps backwards, namely, the first with the left foot, putting the ankle of this one behind the right heel, as is shown in the plate C. And the second with the right foot carrying the point of this one behind the left ankle, and make these two steps so large, that you find yourself very close to his right side, to prevent him from being able to hit you with the point of the sword by a short recovery, and also to prevent him seizing you, and clearing your sword. You will subsequently and promptly make another half turn to the left by which you return towards him, seizing him in finishing this turn with your left hand on the back of his belt, and present him the point of your sword, which you will have in complete freedom, against his kidneys, and with which you can still hit if you like: which you must only do in case he wants to throw himself at you.

This *volta* of *quarte* is very excellent, when it is done well in the same tempo that your opponent thrusts in *tierce*, especially since in pushing it in the straight line by your wrist, you remove your body from in front of it by making this *volta*, [and] by this means [it] cannot touch you, and you cannot fail to give him your *botte* in the flank, as long as you

turn the wrist well in *quarte* below his sword, and adjust your point properly by which your opponent will not fail to be struck in the encounter that he will make with his body, in extending and thrusting this *tierce* so.

6. You can also, at the same time that he thrusts you in *tierce*, make a disengagement in the instant that he makes his by striking you his *botte*, extending yours to him in *quarte*, taking his foible well with the forte and true edge of your sword.

7. If your opponent thrusts you his *botte* high towards your head, you will parry it by lifting up your sword's forte and true edge, breaking the measure by withdrawing with the movement of the body alone, dropping your left shoulder and your head as low as you can towards the knee in order to let this *botte* pass above, which being finished you will bring your sword point up, by the movement of the wrist, riposting and thrusting in *seconde*, striking under his wrist.

8. In the same time as your opponent extends you his high *botte*, instead of parrying it, you can strike him yours in *seconde*, which is the same counter represented in plate marked B.

9. We have said here before that there is more generosity and honour in disarming your opponent than in killing him: This is why it is very important and necessary to teach the method, which is in this way.

*The very sure method to disarm one's opponent.*

You can disarm your adversary when he thrusts you his *botte* in *tierce*, and when he lunges at his full length, you will parry this with the forte and true edge of your sword, closing well your openings on the outside with this, both above and below, so that he cannot touch you there, and at the instant that this *botte* will be passed to the outside by the opposition of your sword's forte, you will make a big step forward with the left foot, and promptly seize his sword with your left hand, taking it very close to the hilt: and in doing this void your right side, carrying it behind your left, placing the right foot with a traverse, so that the ankle of this is towards your left heel, presenting your sword which you will hold back with the point towards his stomach, your wrist turned in *seconde* and held above the right foot, and the arm bent in a half circle. And thus you will hold him subjected by the taking of his sword and the point of yours, in such a way that he will (as they say at present) sing and depart you and leave his sword. This is the surest and least dangerous way of disarming of all those that one can make or invent. This same taking is just as safely made when he thrusts you in *quarte*, as when he lunges you in *tierce*.

*Second decision of disengagement with design or without design.*

I pass to the second, and say that if your opponent disengages without thrusting you his *botte*, you must understand that he does this with design or without, in other words, whether to simply disengage his sword, or to make a feint, or to give you an opening and cause to strike him in *tierce*, in order to trap you by the one of the nine counters of which we have spoken.

If you are in fear of one of these counters, you will use a counter to the counter, which you will do in this manner: at the same time that he will disengage and give you an opening by doing this in *tierce*, you will thrust him a half-*botte* in this opening of *tierce*, by which you will see if your adversary has a design to take the counter or not. If he does not move at all, you will finish your *botte* to the body, and if he strikes you below or turns [*volta*] his body, believing that you are extended to your entire length, you will parry that below or this *volta*, and then finish with the thrust to the body: and so by this counter of the counter, you will take him who thought he could strike you, and if he made this disengagement without design or to shake you off, you will take him on the tempo of the sword. That is to say, on the tempo that he unbinds his sword's foible from the inside of yours to the outside, you will thrust him in *tierce*, running strongly with the forte against the foible, and by so doing you will parry and give your *botte* at the same time.

### *Third decision of the dispute.*

If your opponent contests, that is to say, that when you engage him with the half-forte of your sword while closing through the same means your three doors to guard with the *tierce*, instead of disengaging and thrusting his *botte*, he wants by the force of his wrist, in taking also the foible of your sword with his half-forte, to reverse it, and make you from being the engager into the engaged.

To remedy this you must yield to the force at the same instant that he renders you from engager into engaged, you will thrust him in one tempo in *seconde*, and pass on him in making a big step forwards with the left foot, seizing his sword with the left hand close to the guard, and disengaging yours from below to above his own, which you will do nimbly with a movement of the wrist, making it turn smoothly from low to high, passing the point of it by the front of your right foot in rising, and, finishing the turn, [you will] present it before his stomach and, by this means, constrain your opponent to sing and leave you his sword, and if he wants to make the effort of jumping on you, you will prevent him by the point of your sword, with which you can hit him if you wish.

But if your opponent is quicker than you, and when making your pass, and going to seize his sword, he changes hands by taking it in his left hand by the blade above the guard, you must, as soon as you see him make this change, return to guard, jumping back, in fear that he hits you with the left hand.

This way to yield to force is very excellent, and it has two ends, which are in making it well, you will not fail to hit or disarm your adversary, or to do them both together.

### *Fourth decision when the adversary does not move at all and remains engaged.*

If your opponent does not move at all and remains engaged, you will thrust him your *botte*, but before doing that, you must know these three things, which are 1. where your adversary will go to in the parry, 2. where he will not go anywhere, 3. where he will thrust you in the same tempo; so well that to succeed and to keep you from falling into these pitfalls, you will act in this way, which is to strike him and extend a half-*botte* in *quarte*, extending the arm and the body, bringing the foot forward to half way. By making this half-*botte* you will see his countenance in the same tempo, which will be to make one of these three things mentioned above. If he does not go to parry, you will continue and finish thrusting your *botte* in *quarte*; or if he also thrusts you in the same tempo of your half-*botte*, be it by taking the counter from below in *seconde* or in turning [*volta*], you will use the counter of the counter, which is to parry this counter, and afterwards finish your *botte* to the body.

If he goes to make the parry, he will go with method or with none: if he parries by movement of the wrist, without departing from his posture, with his forte and true edge

of the sword, which is the best and the most sure, you will thrust him from *quarte* to *seconde*, that is to say, when you will thrust this half thrust in *quarte*, placing all the parts of the body in the same posture as when you thrust fully and with length, on which tempo your adversary is going to close this opening with his parry mentioned above, in the same instant he will touch the foible of your sword in crossing it, with the half-forte and true edge of his, you will turn the wrist and carry all the other parts of the body from the posture of *quarte* to that of *seconde*, and here extend and finish this last half-*botte*, while passing with the left foot, and making the seizure of his sword in the same way as we have written in the third decision of the dispute.

Or else, if your opponent parries with his sword's forte by raising the wrist to prevent receiving yours over it, seeing this opening closed, you will bring your sword's foible around by the movement of the wrist, from above his guard to below, where you will find an opening in which you will finish your *botte* in *quarte*, and this blow is called cutting into *quarte* [*couper en quarte*] under the wrist, or '*botte coupée*'.

Otherwise, if your adversary goes to the parry with all his strength, that is to say, carrying his arm and wrist too much to the inside, in the hope of driving your *botte* far from his body, you will quickly make a disengagement with your sword's foible from inside to the outside without letting it touch, and finish your *botte* in *tierce* where you will find a nice opening, through which you will take him.

And if your opponent is not shaken by all of your half-*bottes*, and when you finish them with all your length, you cannot touch him, because he breaks measure, with a backwards movement of his body.

In this you will use the *quarte* of left foot to trap him, which you will do in this way, and to better surprise him you will hold yourself a little out of measure, so that with your sword's foible you can only touch his [sword's foible], and from there you will strike and extend in *quarte*, extending yourself forward a little more than the half-*botte*, and immediately you will complete to thrust to the body by two steps while joining him and seizing his sword, making the first step with the left foot forward, you holding always well from the side, the shoulder and left arm voided back, holding the arm and right wrist well extended, to cover yourself firmly with the forte and true edge of your sword and, finally, you will make a second step with the right foot, and in finishing it, you will carry the side and left arm forward in turning it towards your opponent while seizing his sword. This *quarte* of the left foot is very beautiful and sure, when it is done promptly, and it strikes severely notwithstanding any breaking of measure that one can do by the movement of the body. It is also excellent against those who parry with the hand, and deceives them greatly as you will see in its place.

*End of the engagement of quarte*

*Of the engagement of tierce.*

If otherwise you see that your opponent holds his guard to the inside, leaving no opening except to the outside of his sword, which we call *tierce*, you will close measure gently, and engage with your true edge and half-forte of the sword, the foible of his own in *tierce*: having done this, you must remember the four rules that I have decided, which are 1. where your adversary will disengage while thrusting you in *quarte*, 2. Where he will simply disengage, either to make a feint, or to disengage and engage you, 3. where he will contest, 4. where he will not stir at all.

*First decision of the disengagement of tierce while thrusting in quarte.*

If your opponent thrusts you in *quarte* on the tempo that you are going to engage in *tierce*, you must use these counters here after, to protect yourself and inconvenience him.

Firstly, you can parry this *botte* which he thrusts you in *quarte*, with your the forte and true edge of your sword, and afterwards riposting promptly in the opening that you will see most fit, but you must understand that there are three different openings, by which your adversary while thrusting his *botte* in *quarte* leaves you an opening, but to know which one, one must know all three and have a good and quick eye to not strike your riposte blindly and haphazardly. But to be certain of the opening by which you want to give your riposte, you must consider well and look with an assured eye in which posture your adversary holds his wrist when thrusting you his *botte* in *quarte*: if he holds it high, to not leave any opening above, having parried you will strike your riposte in *quarte*, cutting under his wrist to where the opening will be.

If he thrusts in a straight line holding his wrist in the middle, to not give too much of an opening below, you will see the opening over the guard [hilt] of his sword, through which you will thrust your riposte in *quarte*. And finally, if in parrying he carries his wrist too much to the inside to chase with the forte of his sword the foible of yours, away from his body, leaving by this means his entire flank uncovered on the outside, having parried with the forte and true edge of your sword, you will thrust him your riposte in *quarte*, and will adjust your sword's foible in crossing on the outside below the forte of his, in his flank which you will find uncovered. This *botte* is called "*flanconnade*" because it is given in the flank.

Secondly, you can use this counter here, which is very good and sure, which you will do in the same tempo that your adversary thrusts his port [port of the sword] at you in *quarte*, forcing your sword's foible with his forte, without amusing yourself to contest or parry in the same instant that he throws his *botte*, you will take him as he thrusts also in same instant, yours in *seconde*, lowering your body very low in order to evade his *botte*,

which will pass above your shoulder, and you will not fail to give him yours firmly beneath his sword. This is the blow represented in Plate B.

Third, if your opponent in striking this *quarte* lifts the wrist up, leaving by this means his flank uncovered on the same tempo that he throws it, you will evade it with the body by turning [*volta*] and bending, directly aiming your point of the sword at him in front of his flank, in which you will not fail to give your *botte*.

And finally, if your adversary in thrusting you in *quarte*, lunges with all his strength and length, you will be able to disarm him by parrying with your forte and true edge of the sword, holding the arm and left side well turned back to not be touched by this *botte*, which will pass by in front. This being finished, and without removing your true edge from his, you will advance the body forward by the movement of that, running with your sword's forte from the foible to the forte of his, and all in an instant divert the side and left foot, with which you will make a big step forward, and quickly lift your sword over his, which you will take in the left hand very close to his guard, removing yours back shortly, and you will present the point of this in front of his stomach, and thereby constrain him to sing and to leave you his sword.

#### *Second decision of the disengage; simple or with design.*

If your opponent disengages without thrusting you, but only to disengage his sword, or to make a feint, or to engage you in *quarte*, or to give you an opening and cause to strike him in *quarte*, in order to take the counter, either by thrusting you below or by making a *volta* with the body, which are two counters to be feared since it is impossible to make two different actions in the same tempo (at least as to what is its two counters) for you cannot thrust and parry them together.

Therefore to remedy this, you must use the counter to the counter, just as I have demonstrated to you in a similar encounter above in the engagement of *quarte*, namely, that if you have dealing with a cunning man, who makes this disengagement expressly to take you with a counter, instead of striking a *botte* in *tierce*, you will strike him a half, upon which tempo if your adversary takes the counter by thrusting you in *seconde*, or otherwise makes a *volta* with the body holding his sword point to strike you, you will parry this counter with your sword, and immediately finish and complete your *botte* to the body, either in the liver, if he has made a *volta*, or in the side if he has struck in *seconde*.

If your opponent makes his simple disengage, that is to say, merely to relieve his sword, you will thrust him in *quarte* all of a tempo on the same instant that he will make this disengage; which is called taking the tempo of the sword, or striking on the tempo of the sword, which is very handsome and much used: and if he makes this disengagement with a beat of the foot, to make a demonstration and feint, you can still take him on the

tempo of the sword. But, if you want to catch him well, in the same tempo that he will make his feint in *quarte*, you will go on purpose to the parry, in order to give him what he desires, which is the opening of the *tierce*, in which he will certainly thrust you with his *botte* there, but you must not fail to surprise him there with one of the nine counters, of which we have written above in the engagement of *quarte*.

If, in disengaging, he goes to engage you in *quarte*, in that you can do two things to him: either let him engage your sword or not. If you let him engage, do not fail to in the same tempo that he engages you, yield to the force, thrusting him in *seconde*, with the form we have heretofore said, or if you do not want to let your sword be touched in the tempo that he will make his disengagements to engage you, you will make him a counter disengagement while thrusting him your *botte* in *tierce*.

#### *Third decision of the contest in tierce.*

If your adversary contests and wants to subject your sword by the force of his wrist, rendering him the master, and keep you engaged in *tierce*: on this challenge make a little resistance at the beginning, and in the instant that you feel him put all his strength to subject your sword to the outside, you will make a disengage with the foible, thrusting him your *botte* in *quarte*.

#### *Fourth Decision if he does not move.*

If your opponent suffers your engagement and does not move, you must act according to the reasoning of which I have written on the same decision of the engagement of *quarte*, which is by thrusting him in *tierce*, he will go to the parry, or not move, or thrust you in the same tempo, while evading your *botte* with his body either by lowering it while thrusting in *seconde*, or by making a *volta* with the body. Therefore, to avoid being caught unawares, you must extend a half-*botte*, on which tempo your adversary will not fail to want to execute his design; if he takes the below, or makes a *volta* the body, you will parry and afterwards complete striking your *botte* in the opening which you will find the most appropriate to give to the body.

If he does not move in the tempo of your half-*botte*, you will finish it to the body, and if while you are finishing it with the firm foot, and extending to all your length, he breaks measure with a movement of the body backwards, so that you cannot touch him, instead of finishing on the firm foot, you will finish it on the left foot by passing on him.

If he goes to the parry, this will be by raising this blow high by his forte and true edge of the sword lowering the body and the head to the inside, or he will parry to the outside to the side, either with the true edge or with the false edge of his sword, if it is by raising and covering, you will finish your *botte* by cutting below the wrist in *seconde*.

If he goes to parry in *tierce* with the forte and true edge of his sword, you will finish your *botte* by disengaging and thrusting it in *quarte*.

And finally, if he goes to the parry with the false edge of his sword, you will turn the wrist from *tierce* to *quarte*, and complete thrusting your *botte* to the body, by making a *volta* and closing to your opponent for fear that he strikes you in the side that remains uncovered.

And the reason why one must finish this *botte* so from *tierce* to *quarte* is because all those who parry with the false edge remove their point of the sword from in front of their adversary, and leave an opening in so doing to the outside above the wrist, through which you can give them to the body by thrusting there in the above manner.

### *Third engagement of the high guard.*

If your opponent keeps his guard high to not let his sword be engaged, and to have greater freedom and strength to execute his designs.

Despite all this, and though he seems to threaten heaven by the point of his sword, it should not put you in trouble, and to make his guard and execution of it unusable, you will close your doors and openings nearest and most convenient to this enemy, and leave him the farthest openings, which you will attend with assurance: and to do this you will attack and engage this high guard below with the half-*forte* and true edge of your sword, which you will hold firmly with the wrist in angling and crossing, ensuring that your sword point is raised a little higher, in order to leave no opening above this, through which your opponent can hit you: this is why you must hold the body well back on the left side, holding the shoulder and the head slightly bent in toward the knee, and in this way close up with the foot until you are in measure: and, although you cannot touch with your sword the foible of his, it will not matter to you at all, simply shutting it out above and placing it in the impossibility of being able to touch you there, being covered there as was said, not giving any opening except below your wrist, which opening you will guard carefully to prevent your enemy from entering; and to do this you must observe the same order that we have written of at the preceding engagements, which is that by thus holding it engaged below and shut out above your sword, he will not be able to do you anything else, but disengage while thrusting you in *seconde*, or he will simply disengage, or with design, or he will contest, or he will not move.

If he thrusts you in *seconde* while disengaging from above to below, you can parry this *botte* in three different ways, namely, either with the forte and true edge of the sword, leaving the point of that up, and with a movement of the wrist throw this *botte* inside to make it pass in front of you without touching: or parry it with your half-*forte* and true edge of the sword, like when you give a lash of the whip by turning your point from high to low, raising the wrist up and turning it so that the fingernails are located towards the

head of your adversary, and in this way you will again throw this *botte* to the inside in front of you, or otherwise you will parry it with your true edge of the sword, lowering the point of it down, and turning your wrist to *seconde*, which will prevent the disengage by your opponent, and will make his *botte* pass on the outside without that being able to touch you: and after having made one or the other of these three parries, you will riposte and thrust your *botte* in the best opening that he will present to you.

At this same *botte*, you can even make this counter, which is very subtle, but you must have a quick and prompt body, namely, that in the tempo that your adversary will make his disengagement to strike you his *botte* in *seconde*, you take him on the tempo of this disengagement, by thrusting him in *quarte*, while making a *volta* with the body, and in doing so you will not fail to give him yours, and render his without effect: and every time that he will make this disengagement, either to thrust you or to make a feint, you can make the same counter.

If your opponent contests with his sword against yours, and goes to pass on you and to seize you, you will take him in the tempo of the foot, that is to say at the same instant that he raises the foot to advance on you, you will thrust him in *seconde* by disengaging from above to below.

If he does not move and remains engaged, with the intention of forcing you to thrust him in *seconde*, in order to take you in counter tempo.

To make all of his designs useless, you will make a demonstration to him below with a half-*botte*, upon which he will thrust you in *quarte* and by *volta* the body (as I have said) you will serve a counter to the counter, either by counter *volta* or by parrying.

This *botte* can be parried in two ways, either by raising the foible of your sword, and quickly closing this door and opening that you will have left open by making [this] demonstration, and in this way you will make this *botte* pass over your shoulder to not do any harm, and afterwards riposte him and give your *botte* to his kidneys, if he has extended while turning.

Or parry by ceding to the force (in the manner that we have written initially in the engagement in *quarte*, when one thrusts in *tierce*, while forcing the foible with the forte) by turning the sword from low to high, and finishing this turn to give with a *reverso* an *estramasson* on the head.

Or otherwise you will make the counter *volta* to his, which is very good in this meeting, and which you will use on the same tempo that your adversary will thrust you in *quarte*, in the tempo of your half-*botte*, by making a *volta* of the body, or with a firm foot. You will also make a *volta* to remove your stomach from in front of his *botte*, and in doing this turn the wrist in *quarte*, holding your point of the sword firmly and straight against his kidneys, which will not fail to meet them while you are joining the one and the other in retreating, and so you will evade his *botte* while giving yours.

And finally, if your opponent pulls away and goes to parry your half-*botte*, you will take him on the tempo of his pulling away to thrust him over his sword in *tierce*.

And if he does not pull away and does not move on the tempo of your half-*botte*, you will continue it and finish all in one continuation, either with the firm foot or in passing, as will seem good to you.

*Fourth and last engagement of the low guard.*

If your adversary holds his guard low, namely the point of his sword towards and near the ground (whether he has the wrist turned in *quarte* or in *tierce* does not matter) by holding that guard, he presents you his whole body uncovered above his sword. You must believe that he does not do that without purpose, and judge what it may be.

But his design will inevitably be to give you cause to extend him your *botte* to his body, which he reaches out to you as if uncovered, so that, in this tempo, he can take you by the counter, which will either be to parry with the hand (as is usual for all those holding a similar guard) or to make a *volta*, or by taking it underneath, or if you stop to beat his sword by taking the counter, unbinding the foible of his and thrusting you over yours.

In order to deceive the deceiver, and overcome all his snares, you will come to measure, and engage this sword above with the true edge and half-*forte* of yours, with which you will close your openings below so well, that you have no opening to guard except above that. And if your adversary takes the counter of your engagement by disengaging from below, [and] thrusts you in your opening, do not fail to take the counter of his counter, namely, either to parry by lifting this blow high, and afterwards riposte him by cutting under his wrist in *seconde*, or evade his *botte* by making a *volta* of the body while turning the wrist in *quarte*, and reaching for him and presenting firmly and straightly your sword point in front of his body (just as is represented in plate C) or thrust well underneath in *seconde*, in the tempo that he strikes you above.

Otherwise, if he does not move and remains engaged, presenting his left hand forward to parry, you will thrust him a half-*botte*, on which if he strikes you beneath, or by making a *volta*, you will parry this counter and then finish your *botte* to the body.

Whereas if he does not move and does not pull away upon your demonstration, you will also finish it to the body.

And if he pulls away and goes to parry with his hand from high to low, you will subtly unbind your sword's foible by diverting it with the movement of your wrist, from below to above his hand while finishing your *botte*, either with the firm foot or with the left foot in passing on him.

Or even if he does not pull away remaining assured, before finishing you will give him a beat of the sword and after thrust to the body, and doing so you will deceive his hand and his sword along with all his designs, by executing yours.

*That the parry with the hand is dangerous.*

The parry of the hand is very dangerous to those who use it, because they must present their whole body frontally before their adversary, and therefore it is very difficult to protect. In addition it is much easier to deceive the hand than the sword, and then in this posture, the body is not at liberty to be able to evade, nor execute the tempi, counter tempo and counter to the counter. And finally they cannot have another design than to parry, and riposte, which is very little, since the best counters are without parries. Because of this, having seen and considered that it was not absolutely necessary, we have discarded the daggers, having found that the parry with the forte of the sword and the evasions of the body are much better and safer, than the parry with the hand and with the dagger, which found themselves deceived at all times.

This is the surest method that you must hold, guard and observe, when attacking and engaging your opponent, either with the sharp sword or foil, which method consists of two things: namely, theory and practice, and whoever may possess them, bound and joined together, by good conduct and strength of judgement, will make wonders in this exercise. But to possess and join these two parts cannot be done without spending much time and continuous work.

*Objection.*

But some may say that I place all the perfection of this exercise of the sword in the engagement of it, even though there are many people who have so subtle a wrist in the disengage that it is impossible to keep them engaged, nor to even touch their sword.

To which I respond with my proposal, in which I have said that in closing your three doors and openings, he will also fail in doing that, to close (if it were possible) the freedom of your adversary's sword, and guarding well the fourth door which you leave open, and then I have shown you, on all the tempi, movements and disengagements that that he would have little to do you, all the remedies and counters needed to protect you, and defend you from him.

And you must understand when I have spoken of confining and engaging the freedom of your adversary's sword, it is not absolutely necessary to touch it with yours, because I know very well that this cannot be done against all people, each having different holds of guards, some holding it withdrawn, others very high or low, and some crossed and so remote to the inside or outside that it is impossible to touch them.

But this does not prevent that you close your doors that are the closest to your enemy, nor that you do not attend to that which you leave open, and it is by this means to shut him outside and to remove him his snares, and to break all his designs to make him fall and take in yours.

But before moving to the second part of this treatise, it is necessary that I speak of reprises, feints and beats of the sword.

### *Reprises.*

*Reprises* are very good and necessary in this play and exercise of the sword, and are done in this way (for example), if I see that my adversary gives me an opening in *quarte*, into which I thrust him a *botte*, and on the tempo that he will go to the parry and to close this opening with the forte and true edge of the sword, while letting the foot go backwards to break the measure, all of a tempo, I advance my left foot, and joining it close to the right heel, disengaging the sword point from inside to above his, I will thrust him in *tierce*. And if he still goes to the parry it and to raise it high, I will disengage from above and thrust below in *seconde*. And finally if he still goes to the parry below, I will make a disengagement from below his sword while thrusting him above, and so while he will continue to go to the parry, I will also continue to strike and extend my *bottes* in the openings that he will give me until I have caught and hit him: and that is what we call *reprise*.

### *Of the feints or demonstrations.*

Feints and demonstrations are the same thing: there are four different guards, causing four engagements: the four engagements, four openings: the four openings, four disengages: the four disengages, four parries: and the four parries, four feints.

The feints serve to defeat the parries; these feints are dangerous to he who makes them, if he does not know to supplement, sustain and defend them with the counters. For whosoever makes them with no other purpose than only to unsettle his adversary is soon taken on the tempo of that demonstration.

But to use it with assurance, here follows how you must act: for example, you see that your adversary is so well in guard and covered, that he does not give you any opening except in *tierce*, which opening he reaches out to you as a deliberate trap to take you if you go recklessly.

In order to remedy all inconveniences that could happen to you, you will make a demonstration of striking your *botte* in this opening in *tierce*, but before doing so, you must be very sure that your adversary will go to the parry, or will not go [at all], or will thrust you on the tempo of your feint. If he goes to the parry, you will take him on this

disturbance by finishing your *botte* to him in *quarte*; if he does not go to the parry, you will continue your *botte* and finish it straight in *tierce*; and if he thrusts you in *tierce* on the tempo of your demonstration, you will take him by one of the nine counters, written of in the first decision of the engagement of *quarte*.

Feints by half-*bottes* are highly demonstrative, and deceive many, because they approach very near to full *bottes*: which force a man to uncover his designs, which being uncovered cannot serve him except for his loss. They are made by the movement of the wrist in *tierce*, in *quarte*, above and below the sword. And you must not in any way shorten the arms in making them. You can make them single, double and triple.

#### *Of beats with the sword.*

The beats with the sword are very good, and are done with the movement of the wrist, striking the foible with the half-forte and true edge of the sword. But whoever wants to use them must likewise use the same precautions that I have shown and taught above in the lesson on feints, expecting that a man of good sense should never do, nor undertake any action before having contemplated and foreseen all the events which may happen.

These beats greatly serve a man who has a good and quick wrist, beating with the movement thereof with his true edge and half-forte of sword, the foible of that of his adversary, to make him make an opening, expelling the foible of the sword from in front of him, tiring his wrist and breaking his designs.

But as there is no such great evil, that there are no remedies: all that you know to execute, you can counter.

Therefore, before making this beat, you must be assured that your adversary will let his sword be beaten and afterwards will go to the parry, or will not go, or will take the counter to your beat by disengaging and thrusting you his *botte*. For example, [if] you wish to beat the sword of your adversary in *quarte*, you need a tempo to make it, in which he can take the counter, which is the most beautiful and subtle that one can execute, namely, that on the same tempo that you go to beat his sword, he subtly disengages his point without letting you touch it and strikes you in *tierce*, where he will not fail to give you if you are not prepared to make the counter to this counter, which you will make in the tempo that you will see your beat without effect, and that your adversary strikes you in *tierce*, you will make a *volta* with the body, turning the wrist in *quarte*, holding the point of your sword straight and firm towards his flank, and in so doing you will evade his *botte* by the evasion of the body while bending, and withdrawal from above its line, and you will not fail to adjust yours, and by this means if his counter is good and subtle, your counter to his counter will be even more, which is like giving a remedy for an incurable disease.

If your opponent lets you beat his sword and does not promptly go to the parry, you will thrust him in *quarte*.

And if after your beat, he promptly closes his opening of *quarte* with his parry, you will make a disengagement while thrusting him in *tierce*.

The beats are done in *quarte*, in *tierce*, above and below the sword.

*End of the First Part.*