



John **THE Alchorn**  
Priuate Schoole  
of Defence.

O R  
**THE DEFECTS**  
of Publique Teachers, ex-  
actly discovered, by way of  
*Obiection and Resolution.*

**TOGETHER**  
VWith the true practise of the  
Science, set downe in iudicious  
*Rules and Obseruances; in a*  
Method neuer before  
expresed.

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By *G. H. Gent.*

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**L O N D O N:**  
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TO  
THE HOPE  
OF GREAT  
*Brittaine*, Prince  
CHARLES.



Raise is the end of  
all Arts, the per-  
fection of Praise is  
onely in Eminence,  
which begets Example and Ad-  
miration. Seeing then *great*

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Prince

### The Epistle

Prince) your Birth giues you the best priuiledge to expresse the worthinesse of Vertue, I see not but her followers, eyther in Art or Action, should necessarily flie to your High Patronage. This consideration makes my low deserts looke upward, which in this at least will merit your view, that the Science of Defence, not unworthily stiled Noble, (if eyther truely practised, or rightly vnderstood) was neuer before in our Language brought to any Method. The Professors thereof being so ignorant, that they could rather doe, then make demonstration,  
or

### Dedicatorie.

or reduce their doing to any certaintie of principle.

Many are the imputations laid vpon this Art, (for such I dare now affirme it) the chiefe whereof is, the increasing our bloody and irreligious Duels, which if the name of this Science, being called of Defence, will not auoyd, yet the most licentious age of the Romanes shall sufficiently cleare: No History of those times making mention of any Duello or single fight to the losse of any Noble Person in that State, or disreputation of the publique Iustice. Yet that this kinde of battell was knowne

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*and in some cases approued amongst the Romanes. The Hyperduels betweene the Curatij and the Horatij, and that famous Duell betweene Torquatus and the French-man, apparently speake.*

*It is not then the publique profession of this Science, nor the multiplicite of Professors that increaseth these desperate assassinations: for, Knowledge begets Wisedome, and Wisedome by how much it participates of skill with Discretion, misdoubteth the same in another, and concludes safety as the summe of her abilitie. This is manifest*  
*in*

### Dedicatorie.

*in the Italians, the first inuenter of Foyle-weapon, and the cunningest Practisers, where notwithstanding these single Combats are rather reported then seene; and yet in ruder Countries as Poland, &c. nothing more common; which I impute wholly to a daring Ignorance. Neyther had this knowledge of Defence, if iustly taxed with any so wicked effects, been graced with so many Authentick priuiledges in all well gouerned States, nor the Professors thereof had receiued such honor and respect, insomuch that amongst the Romanes some of them had their Statues erected,*

*as*

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as Plutarch witnesseth. These Reasons (if my iudgement faile not) forcing the same.

First, Necessitie at home, as a Remedie to an vnauoyded Disease, in opposing sodaine assaults, which from Caine, pleading Antiquitie, will not now lose their plantation. And since Innocence is no protection against murtherous intents, God and Nature tollerate this Defence.

The second is, Publique good abroad, for auoyding bloud, if the state of a War should require a single Tryall, which howsoeuer was presumption in Goliath, was  
true

### Dedicatorie.

true valor in Dauid: the imitation of this example, hath beene frequent in great Persons in forraigne, and memorable in our owne Country: as betweene Edmund, surnamed Ironside, and King Canute, to a happy issue. Neyther can I forget an offer in the same kinde made in more late yeeres, betweene Frances the first, King of France, and Charles the fift, Emperour, though without effect.

The last Reason is, Commendable and profitable Exercise. First, no other recreation carries so generall im-  
ployments

### The Epistle

ployment both of body and minde, as this doth : for here the Feete labour equally with the Hands, the Eye and the Iudgement walke together : and for the profit, it leads to as much vse in making the person ready and daring to the warre ; as Horsmanship begets dexteritie for the shooke. The Schoole of our priuate Practise being the same to the Battell, that the Muzet is to the Troope : for with what confidence shall hee goe on upon many, that hath no knowledge to giue him hope of safety from one.

Pardon my tedious discourse  
(most

### Dedicatorie.

(most Excellent Prince) if it be a Crime, not Error but Zeale offends : for how can I choose but speake much of Armes to you, whom wee all expect the most Heroyicke Professor and Defender of the same : to which your future abilitie in your high Atchieuements, if my poore endeouours may giue the least furtherance (as I promise my selfe much herein) I returne from your Acceptance, loaden with full reward and happiest expectation : whom no second respect could induce to the vndertaking this so difficult a Labour, which my Person shall  
in

The Epistle, &c.  
*in your command, in all humble  
service, be euer at attendance to  
make good, resting*

The most deuoted  
Seruant to you and  
your Princely Vertues,

G. H. Gent.



THE  
Priuate Schoole of  
*Defence.*

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THE INDVCTION.

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OME hold opinion  
that Skill auayleth  
little or nothing in  
fight; and therefore  
so soone as they  
shall see this Title,  
will cast away the Discourse, as an  
vnprofitable Argument. Hee that  
is the most obstinateemie to  
himselfe, in reiecting the benefit of  
skill

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skill, must needs confesse it no vaine Exercise, if the aptnesse and facilitie be onely thought on, to which the actiue practise of it brings the body, and enables it for enduring in fight. But to the point of materiall vse.

Of such mens vnderstandings I would know how comes it (then) that an ignorant handler of a Weapon meeting vvith an ordinarie Professor of *Defence* at *Foyles*, can neyther certainly giue offence, nor auoid it.

They will answere mee, that at blunt, a man comes boldly on, and is not troubled with any such considerations, as at sharpe must of necessitie disorder his remembrance, and put him out of fight.

To that, thus; All rules (indeed) must admit some exceptions: heat or cold may some-what distract a fighter;

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fighter; heate in casting him too forwardly vpon a danger: coldnesse in not preparing him to follow an aduantage of offence, yet these come neuer wholly to preiudice the vse of skill: for, speaking of such an heate as alwayes fals vpon this perill; wee must not vnderstand it to be simply that heat needfully belonging to courage; for then it is an orderly Vertue, and loseth no strength eyther borne with it, or taught it; but it must be forced vp into much anger (which seldome happens in the Defendant, for whose cause onely wee professe teaching) before it can turne a man into that weaknesse. Where it doth happen, it is a kinde of madnesse, which (for the time) loseth all reason, as much as that part of skill: and shall good aduice be altogether neglected because



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a madde man is vncapable of it ?

Then touching Coldnes, though it be brought downe into the very basenesse of Feare in one, yet it is impossible to make Skill vtterly of no vse to him. For the gesture of the body vpon such a danger, will naturally fall into those motions that it hath got by practise.

So that skill to euery reasonable man is something a friend. But when it is entertained by one naturally of a good temper, it can by no meanes fall vnder any of their Obiections that dispise it; for such a man brings no more fury, nor lesse assurance with him into the Field, then the Schoole, and therefore will haue as much aduantage of an ignorant man in fight, as there is difference betweene them in practise.

To exemplifie this, you may  
read

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read of one *Coranſo*, a Noble man, who from two and twenty *Duelloes* returned Conquerour: Being demanded the reason by some that considered the equalitie of his aduersaries in shew, and the vncertaine chances of the field: hee answered, Strength, Length, Courage, Temper and Cunning. So he concluded Nature in Art, and attributed the managing of those parts hee was borne with, to the abilitie of those hee was taught.

Since therefore that the Science of *Defence* is vnderstood to be a profession of vse, it followes to examine the defects of Teachers, and to resolue vpon the worth of the knowledge: which followes immediately after our Definition.



## The Definition of the Science of *Defence*, with the parts thereto required.

**T**HE Science of *Defence* is an Art Geometricall, wherewith the body is guarded with a single or double weapon from wrong of the Offender, or the greatest disadvantage of his Offence.

The Parts thereto required are *Strength* and *Iudgement*.

Vnder *Strength* are comprehended *swiftnesse of motion* and *quickness of Eye*: where abilitie is without perfection of these, it is but a supply of defects, drawne from the Iudiciall part or *Iudgement*.

Vnder

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Vnder *Iudgement* fall the considerations of *Time*, *Place*, and *Distance*.

It hath seemed to many that there is no certainty in this Science, which granted, it must lose his title; in whose behalfe wee cannot but with great reason auerre, that as the body is punctuall, so it hath a iust circumference in the hands and feet, which to defence and safeguard thereof, runne in an equall line, which extended with strength in a iust proportion, make the body the same as the Poynt is in Circle, vntoucht or impossible to be violated.

To them that obiekt Example against Knowledge, in that none or few, haue euer attained this height of assurance, I can make no other answer, then argue from their owne Schoole, and say, that none

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or few, in disputation, euer gaue satisfaction without some doubt, therefore Logicke is no Art of true disputing. True it is, all Arts and Sciences haue their iust and absolute bound, to which though in the speculative part or Theorie, many haue arriued, none euer did in practise. Since as in those of words, many subtilties and nimble inuentions oppresse and wrest the best expositions : so in those of exercise of the body, the inequality of place, as the slipping of ground, dazeling of sight, many times disorder the best and surest way of *Defence* and *Knowledge*. Wherefore though by the weaknesse of mans casuall nature, wee can promise to our Scholler no positieue securitie, yet the imperfection in the learner, makes the Art no whit lesse certaine or singular.

To

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To those that reiect the Science, because they cannot promise themselves supream excellence, is to reiect the study of Physicke, because hee cannot be a *Galen*, or a *Paracelsus*; or if any shall from the fall of some man of the sword (as our word men tearme them) by the vnskilfull arme of some rude assailer, contemne our instruction, I would haue such a youth turne Muletter, because *Ventidius* that rubd Asses, came to be Consull, and *Valerius Cato* the Grammarian became a hackney-man : *Fortune* not *Science* herein is to be blamed.

Notwithstanding, that the excellence of this Science may not want Example; I cannot forget the memorable perfection of the two Romanes *Bythus* and *Bacchus*, who hauing fought eightene seuerall Combats or *Duelloes*, returned

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both

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both without hurt, and at the last were both, at one *Passage*, runne through and slaine, leauing no place to Iudgement, that could giue preeminence to eyther: whereupon it became a Prouerbe in Trials of equalitie, *Etthus contra Bacchum*. But I haue digrest too farre *In magnis rebus voluisse sat est*; In high matters it shall suffice to sit in *Phabus* Chayre, though wee cannot runne his full dayes journey: wherefore wee returne againe to handle the parts deriued, which make to approue our Definition; the *Eye* and the *Foot*.

That which wee call *strength*, is not onely a Bucke-beating abilitie of the arme; for the point, to which a'l vie of weapon is now with great reason reduced, is not so blunt but small force makes it enter: neither in *Longe* or *Passage* is the force  
required

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required so much as shift of body, to which the *Eye* must like a faithfull Centinell giue warning, and the *Feete* nimble giue performance: for if the *Eye* faile in perceiving opportunitie, or the *Feete* in taking it, in vaine is the force of arme: on these two then we ground Abilitie, to which the *Iudgement* giues the crowne or conquest.

Now for *Iudgement*, as wee said before, *Time* must be obserued when, *Distance* where, *Place* how. Occasion of *Time* and *Distance* may seeme faire to the eye, yet the *Place* may iustly barre it. As where open way is giuen to a *Passage* with aduantage, the incertaintie of footing may cast you too forward, and disorder your weapon by vnsetled motion. Again, *Place* and *Distance* may both draw you on, yet *Time* may promise by letting slip that  
occasion

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creation, some openet way to greater advantage : for upon every flight, bearing of the arme, it is better to make offer of hurt to that part, then put homes for such profite many times drawes the aduersary to a Guard, that neglects a place of more deadly danger. Last-ly *Time* and *Place* may both succede to your wishes, yet *Distance* may easily checke your resolution : for to no obseruation more then this is the *iudgement* required, which being from our purpose to set downe in figure, I referre you to the laborious worke of *Giosan de Grassi*, the Italian, who handles this point at large, and hath tooke vp much ground in the expression thereof.

Thus much for our Speculative part in this Science, wherein I know you can disagree with me : which

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I could not omit to set downe, because it makes to the honour of the worthy Professors of this Science, whom I desire the courteous Reader by no meanes to imagine that I am so ignorant to meane, where any question is made of their sufficiency in this Booke : for I dare boldly affirme, for generall Weapons no Country can afford more able and sufficient professors then this our owne in their performance; whose teaching I will not dispraise, if it come not within compasse of these following Taxations, which by way of Objection and Resolution, I presume, I haue made apparantly worthy of censure to all indifferent practisers.

The



The Defects of the Teachers  
of Defence, discovered by way  
of Obiection, in the true use  
thereof, as done in the  
Resolution.

OBJECTION I.



Of the common Teachers  
we see but one forme of  
play, and teach all men alike  
without observing the na-  
ture of the Scholer, whether he be of  
a hot spirit, or a cold; or whether hee  
have advantage or disadvantage in  
his fourtresse, strength or weak-  
nesse of arme or body.

Reso-

of Defence.

RESOLUTION.

HEE that shall teach a strong  
man with a single weapon to  
runne *Passages* with shift, takes from  
him the advantage of his strength,  
who should eyther attend the *Close*,  
or hauing length to his strength,  
should standing offend to the nea-  
rest, as in this Booke you shall finde  
vnder the title *Order for fight*. Or  
hee that shall teach a weake man  
single weapon or binding *Passage* for  
the *Close of advantage*, forfeites him  
to a strong mans mercy, though he  
hath much lesse courage or skill.  
Whereby the defect in the Obie-  
ction plainly appeares, as in ma-  
ny other, rising from this ex-  
ample.

Obiection

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### OBIECTION II.

**T**HE publike Teachers teach, at many weapons, as they giue it out in their Challenges, as though euery Weapon were used with fencerall Guards and Defences, one contrary to another.

### RESOLUTION.

**T**His is meere deceipt, to blinde the eyes of their spectators in publicke, as they doe their Schollers in priuate: for all mentioned in the defect are contrayned in two weapons, that is single Rapier and Quarter-staffe, and their defences, as you shall finde in the rules of Practise.

Obiect.

## *of Defence.*

### OBIECTION III.

**T**hey teach all men to lye at a settled guard with their whole brest towards their enemies, and doe likewise make them trust to a Daggers defence.

### RESOLUTION.

**T**O giue the whole brest, when the more thin the body offers it selfe to the offender, the more free it is from being hurt, is no lesse absurd, then if they should teach only to guard the head, & leaue the brest open: for of dangers choose the least. Lastly, for defence, he that trusts to his Dagger, cannot possibly at that instant offend with the same. And there is no surer principle then this; there is no good defence without offence: neither good offence

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offence without defending, which since onely the Rapier or Sword can most certainly doe, the mayne of both must necessarilie be cast vpon them.

#### OBJECTION III.

**T**HE publike Professors of this science, teach nothing at Backe-stroke, and Sword and Dagger, but the bare blow.

#### RESOLUTION.

**I**F the point beates the blow in light as lesse ingaging him that proffers a thrust, then him that offends with edge, which I know and they cannot deny, it is as much prejudicial to their Schollers, to teach them the bare blow at Sword and Dagger, as if they should teach at Rapier onely to thrust and not disorder :

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order : the necessary vse whereof you shall finde in the next Resolution.

#### OBJECTION V.

**I**N single Rapier, and Rapier and Dagger, they teach all their Schollers as they call them, Stucks, otherwise Longe, to throw them into bat without disordering their aduerse Rapier : and doe likewise teach Passages, to runne them right forward vpon theiremie.

#### RESOLUTION.

**T**O my knowledge there is no offending Longe, otherwise Stuck, vpon any man, with any safetie, without disorder : and no Passage that is done without shift, can be without great danger.

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Obiect.



## The Private Schoole

### OBJECTION VI.

**T**hey will suffer their Schollers to see one anothers practise, and likewise they themselves will discover euery mans play to any man.

#### RESOLUTION.

**T**O let any man see anothers practise, giueth much aduantage to the spectator, and is much prejudiciall vnto him whose practise is seene: and most murderous and damnable in the Teacher to betray their owne Schollers to death.

### OBJECTION VII.

**T**hey will seldome or neuer fight in the same guard they teach others: nor so much as hold the same guard

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*guard good to morrow they used yesterday.*

#### RESOLUTION.

**T**Heir knowledge is accidentall, not materiall, they haue some generall notions, which (wanting Art) they cannot reduce to heads and principles: how can hee then be constant in one guard, that cannot set downe any for best, and yeeld a reason thereof?

Hence it comes that I was taught more in a weeke by an vnderstanding Artist, then I could learne in seauen yeares practise in publique Schooles. And if any of their Schollers happen to be excellent, it proceedes rather out of their owne wittie and industrious obseruance vpon the accidents of practise, then from any certaine de-

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monstra-

### *The Private Schoole*

monstration of their Teachers.

Considering all these aduantages and disadvantages, let euery man make his owne Practise private, and with those hee may haue no cause to deale withall: for their nice trickes in Schooles, or Player-like fights at many Weapons vpon Stages, are mere shadowes without substance. Therefore let Art and Nature be ioyned in one.

#### *Order in fight.*

THE managing of a Quarrell is halfe the performing thereof, let euery man be rather Defender, for hee hath the aduantage of the Offender in choyse of Weapons. Let him if hee bee strong make choyse of a single Weapon, eyther being a long Rapier, or a long Sword: for the Challenger hath thereby the disadvantage of a strong man

### *of Defence.*

man; for hee cannot command his point to help his weakenesse vpon the *Close*. Or likewise a *Turkey Samorie*; for he is crooked, and hath a broad point that will not enter, and therein is the least danger of all; and is much auailable for a strong man for the *Close* of aduantage to disarm.

Let him that is weake of body, and hath a short reach, make choyse of a double Weapon, being a short Rapier and Dagger, or short Sword and Dagger: so may he the easier command them to help his weakenesse; for he must keepe his enemy from the *Close*. Therefore let him giue a little ground, for that will encourage his enemy (a strong man desirous to close) to come forwards. Then is your *Passage*, or *Crosse-Passage* with *shift* vnexpected: or if he hath length and not

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strength, let him offend to the highest parts, otherwise answere.

Likewise if a strong man be offender, and hath a long reach, let him offend at length to the highest part, or else to seeke for the *Close of aduantage* as aforesaid.

*To help the length of a short man:*

**I**F a weake man be offender hauing a short reach, let him runne *Passages* vpon his enemy, with as much *shift* of body as he can: Shun the *Close*; for if hee seeke to hit at length, hee giues aduantage to his enemy to hurt him; for his enemy hath aduantage at length by reach, and aduantage of strength vpon the *Close*, or if hee be strong though short of reach, let him make choyse of a single Weapon to disarm.

*To*

### *of Defence.*

*To help the strength of a weake man.*

**T**Hree things help the strength of a weake man: change the point when the aduerser seekes to take it; change backe to recouer it; or else open your side, and then it is not well to be taken.

*A good Guard*

**I**S hee that lyeth with the right side as thinne as hee can, towards his enemy, and the point no higher then the shoulder, trusting to your Rapier or Swords defence; for thereby your enemy hath little roome to hit, and you the lesse to defend. And also a good guard discourageth the enemy to offend, and is ready alwayes to defend. He that dazels much neuer defends well: for if you offend when hee

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dazels,

### *In private Schools*

Single he can neither certainly de-  
fend himself, nor offend you.

For that doth practise many  
guards is most commonly con-  
sidered to be one and is fight that be-  
haviour one most to be constant in  
a good guard, and then to put out  
withon great advantage: for hee  
that offends is thereby the earlier  
hurt, and if you offend upon one  
side, hee will his guard offend to the  
right hand, for then you may goe  
sure of it, and if you offend to  
the other parts that lyeth further  
off your offence is slow, and most  
commonly past recovery, if it doe  
in or not, for a hapier enters, and  
continues at the Foyle doth, helpe  
the officer of agame, but rather  
merits the punishment.

### *Principles*

### *of Defence*

#### *Principles belonging to Fight*

Stay no longer within reach of  
your enemy then you are offe-  
ding.

Offend alwayes upon the aduerses  
comming forward.

In offending, give off with your  
weapons point straight to your  
enemies brest, for then you are al-  
wayes ready to defend your selfe,  
and offend your enemy.

Many trickes doe too much  
trouble the minde: know all, the  
few; three defends the whole.

#### *Rules of Practice.*

There is but three certainties in  
single weapon.

1 *Lunge.*

2 *Parry.*

3 *Change: backe and move on  
then backe to your guard.*

And

### *The private Schoole*

And likewise three Offences.

- 1 *Disorder Longe.*
- 2 *Disorder Passage.*
- 3 *Four binding Passage for the Close of advantage.*

The Dagger helps the Rapier especially in two things in Offence.

- 1 *Passage.*
- 2 *Crosse-Passage.*

And two in Defence.

- 1 *When the Rapier bindes high, the Dagger bindes low.*
- 2 *Or when the Dagger binds high the Rapier bindes low.*

The chiefeſt way to force a man to good praſtiſe for play or fight, is to make him maintaine a ſingle weapon againſt all aduantages.

Fiſt, let him learne ſingle Rapier: then to maintaine ſingle Rapier againſt Rapier and Dagger; and likewise againſt Sword and Dagger: and laſtly, to maintaine ſhort

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ſhort Sword againſt all the aforeſaid aduantages.

I haue concluded my rules of Praſtiſe, and the whole Booke, with the moſt neceſſary inſtruction belongs to this Science, and the leaſt obſerued in Schooles, which is the maintaining of Defects: this being the ſcope and true end of our ſkill, to help the weake, wherein the ſtrongeſt ſhall alſo confeſſe himſelfe to want this knowledge, if he conſider the uſe thereof in accidentall quarrels, which cannot be denied much to exceede occasions for the field: for ſuppoſing himſelfe incident to ſodaine on-lets, how is hee provided with his wearing weapon, being for the moſt part, a ſingle Rapier or ſhort Sword, to defend himſelfe from the aduantage of a Sword and Dagger, Rapier and Dagger, or Halberd? whereas by praſtiſe

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against this vnequall opposition (as in the Chapter before prescribed) he shall finde himselfe enabled not onely for defence in this extremity, but also may offend his aduersarie, as I haue seene vpon the publike Stage, a single Rapier most shamefully foyle both Halberd and halfe Pike. To adde to this supply of defect, I would haue a man wanting one hand, or one eye, by practise, to helpe his imperfection: or being lame in both armes, with his feete and shifte of body, to cleare that defect (all cunning in this Art consisting more in feete then hands.) Further, should one be lame in feet hauing eyes and armes, I would haue him practise those Weapons and Guards may best perfect his condition, being neyther able to pursue nor retyre. This I could expresse, being a man my selfe defective,

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fectiue, but that act and demonstration, not words, must make this apparant, wherein I referre my selfe to iudicious tryall, concluding with an Answer to one Obiection, that will arise from meanest vnderstanding, being this.

Why should so few of our Fencers ariue to this knowledge, or to no more height of doing, then this discouery of their defects hath manifested?

I answere, these two conditions must concur to make a Fencer absolute, *Art* and *Nature*; now for *Art* examine the equalitie of those Vthers our Masters brings vp, you shall finde most of them Butchers, Byt-makers, Shooe-makers, or Truncke-makers, men envred to the hide, rather able to bear blowes then auoyd them. Whence wee see a Gentleman or Artill, who can reduce

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duce knowledge vnto rule, in small  
time out-goes his Teacher hauing  
both Hands, Art and Nature, his  
Schoole-master wanting one, and  
many times both of them. Not  
that this my taxation reacheth to  
all Masters of *Defence* : for I haue  
seene some, whom I must confesse  
to be both knowing and able, who  
detest our commonly applauded,  
rude, and buffeting play : whose  
Iudgements will be as far from de-  
prauing mee or my worke, as I shall  
be from the least enuy towards  
them, whom I confesse  
much worthy of esteeme  
and reward.

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