

THE  
FENCING-MASTER'S ADVICE  
TO HIS  
SCHOLAR:  
OR, A FEW  
DIRECTIONS  
For the more Regular  
ASSAULTING in SCHOOLS.

Published by way of Dialogue, for the  
Benefit of all who shall be so far ad-  
vanced in the ART, as to be fit for  
Assaulting.

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By the Author of *The Scots Fencing-Ma-  
ster*, and *Sword-Mans Vade-mecum*.

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EDINBURGH,  
Printed by John Reid, at his Print-  
ing-house in Bells-wynd. Anno  
Domini, 1692.



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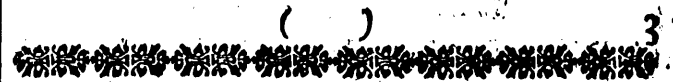
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1606/1384



To the Honourable

SOCIETY  
OF  
SWORDMEN  
IN  
SCOTLAND.

Erected at Edinburgh the 26<sup>th</sup>. of February, 1691.

Gentlemen and Fellow-Sword-Men,

**H**AVING the Honour to be One of Your Society, and being so Fortunate as to be elected at Your first Meeting president for that Year, I think I cannot give a greater Testimony of my Gratitude for that Favour, and of the respect I bear to the Society, then by presenting you with this Token, which although I must confess but a very small One; yet if narrowly canvased, will be found to contain in it more of the Judgement of the Sword, than probably (considering its bulk) could have been expected.

It therefore begs your Protection, & with all humility submits to Your impartial Censure; For who can be fitter Judges of the Subject of  
A 2 this



this Discourse, than persons who have so generously engaged themselves to Maintain, Encourage, and Defend the Usefulness of the ART whereof it treateth.

It is true, it treateth chiefly but of the Second Branch, or Part of this Art; for I think the Art of the Small-sword or Rapier may be very justly divided into three Parts, or Kinds of Practice, which are, The Practice of the Lessons upon a Master's Breast. The Practice of School-play; or of the same Lessons against a Commerad with Blunts. And the Practice of the Abstract or most secure part of the very same Lessons at Sharps, for a Man's Honour, or Life. Now of the First & Last of these I have writ already, of the first in my *Scots Fencing-Master*, & of the Last in the *Sword-Mans Vade-mecum*: So that to perfite all I can say upon this Art, there only remains that I discourse upon this Second Branch, which is of so much the more use, as it is the only means to make a Man perfect in the Third: For a Scholar may play his Lessons very exactly upon a Master, who can neither perform them in Assault nor at Sharps, but it is somewhat rare to find a person dexterous and exact in School play, who cannot perform something at Sharps, I do not mean by his natural Courage and Forwardness, but by an artificial Conduct and Practice of his Lessons.

And



And altho there may in Our Honourable Society be some, who know as much, nay, perhaps more of what belongeth to this, than I can discover to them, and also that it cannot be supposed that any will be admitted into it, who do not in some measure understand how School Play should be performed; yet I may safely say, we are not all of the same Strength and Adroitness; and however useless this Piece may prove to some, yet there are others who stand mightily in need of it, as well in Our Society, as in other Schools throw the Kingdom: And this in my Opinion can be no more a Reflection upon us, than it is upon any other Corporation, that all belonging to it are not alike dexterous and expert in the Trade they profess.

I expect therefore Gentlemen, that You won't be dissatisfied at my recommending this Discourse to Your perusal, seeing it was meetly for the Encouragement of the Art, and Improvement of the Youth of this Kingdom, whereof You are a part, that I was at first induced to enter upon this Subject: And seeing I may without Vanity say, I have been none of the meanest Instruments in persuading many Gentlemen to apply themselves to it, the good effects of which I see in the Erection of this Our Society; I rest satisfied as having fully accomplished my Design, and commending the Gen-

tures of Any, who may Reflect upon me as meddling too much with what they judge does so little lye in my way: I think my self abundantly recompenced (by the Encouragement I see You give the Art) for any small Trouble or Expences I have been at for the benefit of my Countrey-men upon this Subject, of which, if I be not mistaken, I have said all that is necessary, either for the Divertisement, or Defence of a Mans Person.

Continue then, Worthy Gentlemen, Your Noble Design, of Encouraging by this Your Society the Art of the Sword; and as You have cast a generous Coppy to the rest of Britain, whereby they may know what Method to take for the Improvement of their Youth in so useful an Art; so let Your Practice discover and demonstrate to the World, That as Scotland cometh short of few Kingdoms for producing of Spirits capable of any Art or Science, so she will be behind none in advancing the Noble Art of Defence, and training up of Swordmen both to defend It and their Countrey, when a fit occasion shall offer. In doing which You will not only reap the Advantage and Benefit Your selves, but also be an Honour to Your Nation, which that it may for ever flourish and be Famous for Sword-men, shall still be the desire and hearty wish of,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most sincere Well-wisher and humble Servant

W. H.

## To all who are fit for Assaulting.

GENTLEMEN,

**Y**OU may perhaps imagine, that after having writ so much already upon this Subject what I am at present to add to it, is likely to prove either Superfluous, or at best but a Repetition; but I must tell you that strictly considered it is neither.

For in this I am to give you a description of neither Guard, Parade, nor Lesson; having done that so exactly in my Scots Fencing-Master, that were I to do it again, I could not perform it better, than by taking an exact Coppy of it, it being so perfectly conform to the common Method of Teaching, used at present thro' the most part of Europe.

But as all Arts are capable of Improvement; so in Fencing there are Circumstances used now in performing some of the Lessons, which a few Years hence may be rectified, (and upon very just and solid grounds) to a great deal of Advantage: So that altho my Book be most exact now, yet it may come to differ a little in those Circumstances, which may afterwards be thought more agreeable to Reason, and the Natural Situation of the Body.

How

However I am fully persuaded, that whatever Alterations may happen, they will contain more of Form than any essential Differences. So that as long as Fencing is in request, that Book will still be useful, and therefore to those who are grounding in the Art I cannot recommend a better. For it teaches the Art so gradually from the simplest to the most difficult Lesson, that I may justly term it, The Rudiments of the Sword for Beginners, and a sufficient Instructor and Reviewer of the Art, to those who are either advancing to, or arrived at the greatest Perfection this Art is capable of.

Nor am I to give you an Abstract of the most essential Rules in this Art, that are only to be practiced at Sharps, having also done that in the Sword-mans Vade-mecum, and how I have performed it there, I leave to the Decision of those to whom I Dedicated that Piece.

I confess when I write that Book, I thought never to have had any more occasion to enter upon this Subject, but my oft frequenting the Fencing-Schools, especially upon the Assaulting-daves, where I observed a great many gross Absurdities committed by those who did Assault; which I am afraid was not only ground of Derision to some but the reason also of others altogether absenting themselves from the Schools; I say the observing of these things made me discover, that I, and all likewise who have treated of this Subject, had omitted something which might prove very beneficial for the improvement of Young, and persisting of Old Scholars in their

their Play with Blunts, and after having a little considered wherein this omission lay, I found it to be in the not setting down of plain and exact Rules for Assaulting; it is true in my Scots Fencing Master I hinted a little at it, and gave also some few Directions to this purpose, but they are not there near so particular upon this head as I intend they shall be at present.

So for the benefit of Young Scholars, and to prevent for the future the like abuses, I have undertaken to draw out such Directions as I have by my small practice found to be most advantageous in School-play; you are therefore only to expect here those Directions, which are to be as so many Guides, for your more Decent and Regular Assaulting, in setting down of which I shall endeavour to be as distinct and compendious as possible, seeing I will easily be understood by you for whom they are designed, and for others (as I have said elsewhere) they must not imagine that the reading a sheet or two of Print will immediatly inspire them with as much Art as can make them Assault, No, that is not to be expected.

They therefore must at first steer their Course another way, that is, make Application to some Judicious Master, who by his Repute may be judged capable to instruct them, under whose Tutorie I shall leave them until he make them fit to practice the following Directions, which I shall then Recommend to their Perusal, but at present onlie to the Practice of You who are Actuallie, or have been Scholars, and who therefore

fore do commonlie Assault in the Schools upon these dayes, which by the appointment of the Masters are set apart for that purpose.

Practise then Gentlemen, who ever you are, these following Directions, as exactlie as I shall set them down, plainlie and faithfullie, and then we shall see no undecent Postures, nor Grimaces, no Rambling, and but few Contretemps in your School play, the neatness and decencie of which will not onlie draw manie People to the Schools upon the daies of publiek Assault, to behold your play; but also Excite and Encourage manie to follow the Sword, which ever was, is, and shall be the main Design of anie thing I shall say upon this, so Noble and Gentle-manie, but (with a kind of Regrete I speak it) too much neglected Exercise.

ADIEU.



T H E

# Fencing Master's

## ADVICE

TO HIS

## SCHOLAR,

By way of Dialogue.

MASTER.

**B**OY, Go see who Knocks.

Boy. Sir, 'tis one of your Scholars, Mr. Ma.

Ma. Desire him to come forwards.

Sch. Good morrow Sir, I see you are not very early to day.

Ma. No indeed Sir, for you know this is one of my idle days, and when a man fatigues five days in a week for the benefit of his Scholars, he may very well be allowed one to himself, to take a little ease and rest in. But pray, what hath brought you to early here this morning, especially seeing it is neither a day for Receiving a Lesson, nor Assaulting?

Sch. Sir. It was upon that verie Account that I made choice of it, and seeing I have now got you alone, and



## The Fencing Masters Advice,

and also that it is as you say, an idle day, so that we shall not be interrupted by your other scholars; I am resolved to discover freely to you my mind, that so you may see if it is possible in an *Assay*, which I must confess, doth at present not a little perplex me.

Ma. Sir, I assure you I take it as a singular Obligation, that you use this freedom with me, and what ever the matter may be, I shall give you my best Advice in it: But particularly if it any way relate to the Art I profess, in which case I think my self doubly concerned: First as a Friend, and then as your Master, to have your scruple resolved, and taken away.

Sch. I trouble Sir, it is concerning the Art, & it is this; You know it is now more than a twelve month that I have been your scholar, and I have all this time punctuallie attended your school, both for my instruction and Practice; As for the first, You know how I have improved in it, so that I think I may without vanitie say, there is none of your scholars who can play their Lessons more exactlie, and with a better Grace upon your breast then I can; but as for my Practice (I know not what can be the Reason of it) I find it as well as that of your other Young scholars, stark nought; for when we play against one another we are verie oft to seek what to do, and if we perform any thing it is done with so little Art, and so frequentlie by way of Contretemps or exchanged Thrusts, that I think it somewhat difficult to determine whether we are the better of what you

To his Scholar, &c.

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you have taught us or not; And then if an ignorant offer to assault with any of us who are Young scholars, they put us so to it, and do so much confound us with their irregular Thrusts, that they have for the most part the better of it; Now why some of your Old scholars should behave themselves so well against such persons and we so ill? But particularlie my self who hath plied it so hard for more than these twelve months bypast, is what I desire to be resolved of? And also, if you have any Directions which may be for my further improvement and Advantage; That you would (as becometh a Faithful Master) communicate them to me, as to one who designs by all means imaginable to perfit himself in the Art whereof you make profession, and for which I have so great an Esteem.

Ma. I confess Sir your Discourse pleases me mightily, and it is no small satisfaction to me to find you so sensible of your weakness in this Art, and that you have also with so much clearness and Reason given me an account of what troubled you; But seeing it is of no greater moment, then what you have told me, I am hopeful I shall be able to give you full satisfaction, and very shortly have your scruple in this matter removed.

Sch. Sir, if you can but do that, you shall for ever gain my kindness.

Ma. Be pleased then but to spend this one day with me, and with pen and ink mark down what

what I shall dictate to you, and if I do not lay down such infallible Rules for Assaulting, as shall make you (when you come to practice) acknowledge they are such, then I am satisfied, that you not only quite my school; But also esteem me as an imposer upon Youth, and one who considers more his private interest and Advantage, than the publick Good and improvement of his Scholars, and I am hopeful that as yet you do not look upon me as such:

Sch. No indeed sir, for if I did I would not give you this trouble, but now seeing the Morning is so far advanced let us lose no time, and be you also I intreat you, as methodical and short in your Instructions as possible.

Ma. I shall endeavour it what I can, but for the more orderly procedure it will not be amiss to make a little digression, and shew what Method all Masters should take for the better accommodating of their Scholars when they are to Assault.

*How a FENCING-SCHOOL should be Ordered, for the better accommodation of the Scholars.*

**F**irst, A Fencing-School being a place, where Persons of the best Quality do frequently resort for their Exercise and Divertisement: I would therefore have every Master to make choise

choise of as large, well lighted, and well aired an one as conveniently can be had, having if possible, a little Room entering from it, for the Scholars to shift themselves in before, and after Assaulting, which would be much better then for them to be put to the necessity of shifting before the whole company: Both which Rooms should be kept alwayes neat and clean, and sufficiently furnished with Chairs or Forms for the Schollars, or other Persons who come out of curiosity to see the Assaulting, to sit upon, and I would have them so placed as no wayes to incommode the Assaulters; neither (unless the School were so throng that there were not seats enough for them) would I have any to stand save the Master, who is to be as Director and Judge of every thing which shall pass in the School, because such Persons when they stand, do commonly shift from place to place, which not only occasions a noise in the School which is very undecent, but also interrupteth the Assaulters, and is oftentimes the cause of making one of them receive a Thrust, which had they not pressed and incommoded him with their shifting hither and thither, he might have prevented: Now the reason why I would have a large and pleasant School, is because it will prove a means both to draw company thither, and to cause the scholars take the more delight

delight in their Practice, which none can do when they play in a dark and nesty Room.

*Secondly.* All the Shoes and Flurets should be hung out of the way, the neglect of which hath also its inconveniencies: For when they hing near to the place where the Assault is made; if any of the Assaulters (when they are closely pursued) do but retire somewhat near to the wall, immediatly there cometh down about his ears a pair or two of Flurets, which with the surprizing noise they make, do also many times occasion the receiving of a Thrust, therefore every thing which may any ways incommode the Assaulters, should be taken notice of and prevented as much as possible: And thus much for the School it self.

Now a Master having ordered his School after this manner, I would have him in the next place, affix in some exposed and convenient part of it (that they may be in the view of all and the better taken notice of) these following Laws, which indispensably all persons who frequent the school should be obliged to observe under the following Penalties, it being impossible for any Master to have either Order or Decency in his School without them.

*Laws*

## *Laws to be Observed*

*In All FENCING SCHOOLS.*

I.

**I**N the First Place, I would have the dayes of the week appointed for Assaulting, named, (which should be at least once a week, and no Teaching to be upon that day) and every Scholar to be advertised that he is to fore-fault so much, if without a reasonable excuse, he shall upon such dayes absent himself; of the relevancy of which, the Master is to be the only Judge.

II.

*Secondly,* All Cursing, Swearing, and obscene or undilcreet Language, should be banished the School as much as possible, and the better to prevent it.

III.

*Thirdly,* Not only upon those Assaulting dayes, but also the whole week throw, all persons, as well Scholars as others who are only Spectators, should be obliged to silence, at least to discourse within their Voices: For there can be nothing more unseemly, than to see a Fencing-school (which should be a kind of Nursery for accomplishing of Youth) all in confusion and like to a Bir-law-Court, where there is nothing to be heard but a Clutter and Noise of Tongues, whereas in a Fencing-school there should

should be properly no noise heard, save that of the Assaulters Feet, and Flurets, and of the Master's Advices and Reproofs, which he is to give to those who are Assaulting, or who do not behave themselves in the School as they ought.

## IV.

*Fourthly*, No Scholar or other Person should presume to Assault, or offer to present a Flurett to any, without having first asked the Masters consent.

## V.

*Fifthly*, No Scholar nor Spectator without a licence from the Master, should offer to direct or give advice to any of the Scholars, who are either taking a Lesson or Assaulting: I have heard severalls when their Commerads have been Assaulting, call to them after this manner: Why do you not now make a Feint? There was a good time for Commanding, but you did not take it; Why do you not now pursue him? O, see what a brave opportunity for giving a Thrust he hath lost, because of his not Redoubling! And a great many more such expressions as these, which are very unbecoming upon two accounts: First, because without permission they take upon them to play the Master; And secondly, because they reprove oftentimes their Commerads for the same very faults they themselves are most guilty of, although perhaps not sensible of it, which when By-standers

perceive, they smile at them (and with just reason) as being both ignorant and impertinent; therefore it would be a great deal more commendable in them, to be more careful in rectifying their own faults, and less strict in censuring of others.

## VI.

*Sixthly*, No Scholars under six Moneths Teaching (unless the Master shall find them of an extraordinary capacity and adroitness) should be allowed to Assault in publick, but till that time they are by their private Assaults which they have the rest of the week, to prepare themselves for their publick Practice at the six Moneths end; And I am confident if this were exactly observed, the School-play would appear a great deal prettier, and be much truer, than it is at present in many of the Schools.

## VII.

*Seventhly*, No Scholars under a twelve Moneths standing, should be suffered to play in their cloaths or walking shoes, because the playing in that Garb, hindereth them from stretching, and so their Bodies can neither be so pliable, nor their motions so subtil and swift, as is absolutely necessary for every Man to have before he can be a good Sword-man.

## VIII.

*Eighthly*, None should be allowed to play above

bove three or four fair given or receive Thrusts at a time, because Mens Vigour if they play briskly, as they should is spent at that time; and all that they do afterwards but slow and without life, which maketh a play to appear but dull and unpleasant, and therefore they had better after three or four Thrusts give place to the rest, and suffer another two to succeed; in which time they may recover their Wind and Vigour, and fall to again if they please.

## IX.

*Ninthlie*, In Schools all Thrusts at the Face, Arms, Wrist, Thighs, or Legs should be disallowed: For although a Man when he is to engage with sharps, may either for his own safety, or to disable his adversary, Thrust at any part of the body: Yet in Schools (that neatness of play may the better appear) Thrusts should be allowed or accounted as fair which are not given in the Trunk of the Body, that is, beneath the Neck, and above the headband of the Breeches, as to the length; and within the two shoulders, as to the breadth of the Body: For all jerking (or popping out as they call it) at the Arms or Legs, hath not only no grace with it, but also spoyleth all school play, which is what I am at present only discouraging of.

## X.

*Tenthlie*, For the better preventing of Contretemps

in School play; when Thrusts are exchanged, I would have alwayes the Thrust to be decided in the persons favours who was the first Lancer out of the Thrust, suppose his Adversary should also give him another, but without ever going to the Parrade, or offering to defend himself with his Fluret (for I would have all Defence with the left Hand in school play to be banished, except against Ignorants) and this is but just, because it can hardly be supposed that a Man will thus foolishly venture his Life at sharps, and seeing his design was meerly to hit, and not to show his Art, by first endeavouring to parrie the Thrust, (which is the main end of Assaulting) it is but reasonable that as a punishment for not first offering to defend his person, he should be charged with the receival of a Thrust, notwithstanding of his giving another at the same time to his Adversary; but if after endeavouring a Parrade, and having failed in it, he shall receive a Thrust, and then give the exchanged Thrust in the time of the others recovering his Body, then both shall be charged with a Thrust, because although the one was the first Lancer out of the Thrust, yet the other after endeavouring a Parrade and failing in it, returned him another before he recovered himself, or got off: Now his not getting quickly enough off

off, shows he committed a grois fault, contrary to the Rules of Art, for which also as a punishment to him he is to be charged with the Thrust, and so they are to be considered as still in equal terms until another fair Thrust shall be given: I know that one Contretemps, or one exchanged Thrust at sharps, is of greater consequence and more dangerous than a thousand with Blunts, but the best and only way to prevent them at sharps, is to be very careful, and to avoid them as much as is possible with Blunts, to which I am confident this Law if punctually observed, will not a little contribute.

## XI.

*Eleventhlie*, As I said before, all Defence with the left hand in School play should be discharged, (except against Ignorants and great Ramblers) For it not only taketh away a great deal of the variety of play, but it is also noways Graceful to see two making nothing but Jerks and half Thrusts at one another, and lying upon a Catch with their left Hand, as if the Sword hand forsooth were no otherwayes useful, nor not to be made use of but in Offnding or Thrusting: I say therefore once again for all, that although at sharps the use of the left Hand, and thrusting at the Face, Arms, or Thighs, are of great use and oftimes very surprizing, yet because they hinder the variety, and take away a great deal of the gracelulness of school play, I am

I am clearly of the opinion they should be discharged in all publick Assaults, and only allowed in private, that so the Scholars may know how to perform them, when there shall be a necessity for it. But there is as I said, an exception to be made here: For it were most unreasonable when a Man is to Assault against an Ignorant, or great Rambler, to discharge him the benefit of using his left hand, because such persons when they Assault they do it out of no other design, but either to baffle the Artist if they can, or to show that their Ignorance is as useful to them, as the others Art is to him: Therefore I say, in this case an Artist should take all the advantage he can, because his Reputation and Credit in a manner dependeth upon it, and therefore the use of the left Hand being so beneficial against such irregular Thrusts, as in reason may be expected from those who have the confidence to make Ignorance compeat with Art, it should certainly without Controversie be allowed; But, except in this case, I am altogether against the use of it in School play, and that for the above written Reasons.

## XII.

*Twelfthlie*, Although in most part of Schools one Command be reputed equal to a Thrust, yet because a frequent endeavouring to Command doth also prevent the variety of play

play, I would have that custom altered, and no less than two Commands to be reckoned equal with a Thrust; I confess at sharps it is one of the best things a Man can design (although it be both difficult and dangerous to perform) for by that means he not only saves his own honour, but his Adversaries life, which all generous Men should endeavour as much as is possible, but although I allow Commanding to be used in School-play; for it were unreasonable to banish it altogether; yet I am still of the opinion that two Commands should only be accounted as one Thrust; also no struggling is to be allowed to the Commanded after his Fluret is once caught hold of, nor tripping to the Commander after he is Master of it, any thing which may appear like strife or contention in Schools being by any means to be avoided, and that also for the Reasons before mentioned.

## XIII.

*Thirteenthlie*, If in an Assault there shall happen a Fluret to be broke, the person in whose Hand the Fluret is, shall pay it, according to the value set upon it by the Master: It is true there have been Debates concerning this, some alledging that if a Fluret be broke upon any person, it is but reasonable he should pay it, because he did not defend himself better from the Thrust, but to give my opinion in this matter, it is to be considered, That in an Assault a Flu-

ret may be broke two wayes, either by a Thrust or a Blow; *First*, if it be by a Thrust, then it is most just that he who gave the Thrust should pay it, because the other hath already received Affront enough by getting the Thrust, and his person being already punished, it were hard to punish his purse also. *Secondly*, If it be with a stroke or blow, it must either be by giving one upon your Adversaries Fluret, or receiving one upon yours from him; now if you give a blow upon your Adversaries Fluret, and with it break your own, it is but just you should pay it, because you was the cause of it, but if with your stroak you break your Adversaries, then he must pay it, because by his Art he should have prevented such a smart blow, and for not doing of it is justly punished with the payment of his Fluret: So for these Reasons I would have it declared that the person in whose hand a Fluret is broke (whatever may be the cause of it) should always pay it, and this decision I think most equal to take away all debates whatsoever, which may arise upon this head.

## XIV.

*Fourteenthlie*, It would not be amiss, that as there is one day at least of the week appointed for public Assaulting, so there should once also a year be a Prize put forth by the Scholars, to be played for by all persons who intend to show their Art, and

and this would not only cause Scholars be more diligent and desirous to improve themselves, but also excite a curiosity in a great many people to be instructed in the Art, who now never so much as think of it: For nothing hath a greater influence upon Mens actions than Example, and if people can be but once drawn to the Schools out of a curiosity to view and observe the Scholars Assaults, it is ten to one but the same curiosity lead them next to try what they can do themselves, and by this means the Schools would not only be crouded with spectators, but the Kingdom also furnished with Adroit and Courageous Swordmen, to effectuall which, is the main, if not whole design of our Employment.

*Lastly,* It should be with one consent resolved upon, that whoever shall contravene any of the preceeding Laws, is to forfeit *Toties Quoties*, so much as shall be agreed upon by the Master and Scholars, which shall go to the use of the Masters Boy, for his greater encouragement to take care of the Scholars Cloaths, and to keep all things belonging to the School neat, and in order, which Resolve should be affixed to the preceeding Laws, and subscribed first by the Master, and then by all the Scholars and others who commonly Assault upon those publick dayes.

Thus Sir have I shown you how a school should be ordered to make it convenient, and what

what Laws should be observed in it, to make the Assaulting the more decent and regular, by this nowayes restricting Masters, who are free to add what they shall think convenient, and take away what they shall judge superfluous: For I do not pretend to be an infallible Lawgiver to all Masters, but that which remains and is the most difficult of all (although I expect also with your Applause to go throw with it) is the giving you such Rules for Assaulting, as that against whatever person you engage, you may still reap benefit by your Art, by which means you will not only have the scruples you proposed to me removed, but also be satisfied that I have dealt ingenuously, & frankly discovered to you the whole mystery of School play.

*Sch. Sir,* By the reasonableness of what hath been already said, I may judge of the truth of what is to follow: But it seemeth to me very strange that when such exact Rules for decency in schools may be observed, there are few of our Masters do so much as ever think upon them, although the observance of them would certainly so much tend to make themselves respected, their Art admired, and consequently their schools more frequented.

*Ma.* This Sir, I confels I have marvelled at my self as much as any, and at first could not imagine what should be the reason of this their so unpardonable a neglect, but after a more serious Reflection, I found that there are



a great many who take upon them the Name of Master, and pretend to Teach this Art, who have but little of the Judgement of it, and whatever their Practice may be, yet their communicative Art is a meer Rote, which by a continual seven years repetition of Lessons (the ordinary Term of Apprentiship) they have so inrooted in them, that put them off their common jog-trot of Teaching, they are immediately put to a *Nonplus*, and if you ask them a reason for the most part of what they do, they will tell you that it does not become you to ask Questions; and that you are only to do what they desire you; and if you press them further, then is this univereal Reason given for all, I was Taught by such a person who was reputed a brave Master and excellent Sword-Man, and thus and thus he taught me; Again offer but to discourse with them concerning any of the intricat Points belonging to the Art, and you shall immediately find them either shift the discourse, or tell you that these Questions you are asking are (*Arcana Gladii*) profound secrets, which must not be discoursed of, nor revealed to any, but such as intend to make profession of the Art, although perhaps if put to it, they can give no better satisfaction to the point in question than this. *sic dixit Præceptor*, a mean and ignorant kind of Answer, unbecoming any who pretend to the Name of Master.

Now

Now I lay when a mans chief design is only to attain to the superficial practice of the sword (although I confess this is pardonable enough in Gentlemen who are not to make any profession of it, but to use it meerly for their Divertisement or Defence) yet for masters to have no more, is an unpardonable weakness, and let their Practice be never so good, yet not being able to give a sufficient reason for every thing they do, they ought to be look'd upon as good Practitioners, but bad Instructors, and when a man thus contemns Judgement and Reason, he makes use of the Husk and throws away the Kernel, and no wonder then if he also neglect all Decency and Regularity in his School, his design being only Gain, and more to supply his pocket, then improve his scholars understanding and judgement, or gain himself Esteem and Repute where he liveth.

But by this I am not so foolish as to maintain, That Masters should communicate their Art for nothing; yet this I think, that a master should have an equal prospect, to improve his scholars as well in the Theorique as Practique part of his Art, as to advance his own Fortune by what they bestow upon him: Besides the Art of Fencing hath such an unexhaustable Treasure of Varieties, that he must needs have a very shallow Brain, and be strangely wedded to his Masters opinions, who cannot

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make some Observations and Improvement very much to the advantage, and founded all upon solid grounds and most convincing Reasons: For Invention and Variety are two of the Hinges upon which the World moveth, and which with their Charms do bewitch and delude the most part of Men, and seeing Fencing is so well furnished with them, I know no reason why it should not be allowed as well as any other Art, to lay its Baits & discover its Inchantments, especially when but few can go beyond it as to either; but I know none are more to be blamed for this than those Masters, (I should rather say Pretenders to that Title) I am discourfing of.

For far be it from me to tax all Masters with this Ignorance and meannels of Spirit, seeing I certainly know there are some to be found in these Islands, who are most understanding and judicious, and who take delight to communicate what they know to their Schollars; particularly we have in this Kingdom one Mr. *Machrie*, at present Judge and Arbitrator in all publick Tryalls of skill, who is so far from being guilty of this Ommission, that he rather I may say, runneth it possible upon the other extreame for which he is very much to be commended, and for his way of Teaching it is so methodical, and so conform to the Rules of Art, and solid dictates of Reason, that there can

can be nothing more exact, which evidently appears by the regularity of such persons play who have been any time his Schollars: So that without being thought to Complement him, I may say that both for his Theory and Practice, he may compeat with most Masters, having more than once given proof of the Latter at Sharps, and the truth of the Former will be evident to any who will but take notice to his method of Teaching; he hath also amongst his other Qualifications, this advantage which many Masters want, for he is not only a great Master of the Small, but also understandeth the Art of the Broad or Back-Sword to perfection: so that I have seen several *English & Irish* who pretended to be publick Gladiators to be baffled by him, when out of civility he presented them in his School with a Cudgel, that any Artist would have judged them to have been but the Schollars, and him the Master, as he indeed was but too much, considering the advantage his just and smart play had over theirs: And really Sir, relating to this subject I am discourfing of, I can scarce give you a more friendly Advice, than to desire you to be acquainted with him, & if you will give your self but the trouble to communicate to him what I have, and shall say to you upon this subject, I doubt not in the least but he will approve of it, and be one of the first who shall caule observe in his School these Rules I have laid down for  
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Assaulting, and also add more of his own to them, as he shall think fit and convenient.

Sch. Sir, it seems this Master and you must be very intimate, that you give me so favourable a character of him: For I find the generality of Fencing Masters now a dayes do quite the contrary, for instead of commending their Brother Professors, they do all they can to reproach, callumniat, and lessen their esteem by all the mean and base methods imaginable, whereas I perceive you are quite of another temper; for you prove only those who are guilty of Errors, & Omissions, but you have an esteem for, and gives a favourable character of such who by their carriage and conduct deserve to be well lookt upon and encouraged.

Ma. Sir, although I cannot deny, but the Master of whom I am discoursing is of my acquaintance, yet I assure you there is nothing of Flattery in what I have said, for I am confident every judicious Artist who knows the method he taketh to communicate his Art, will confess he fully deserves the Applause I have given him, and upon any other account, take my word for it, I am no more concerned in him than any other Professor, but I think every Master should have his due, and I think his is rather more, as less than what I have given him; I love to deal fairly and judge impartially, and I wish all Masters were of the like temper: For as you have very well observed, it is a shame

and reflection upon persons of the same profession, to see them at such Odds & Variance one with another, that they are scarcely in speaking terms, and doing all they can to draw away & seduce others Schools by making them believe that they have a meer Dolt and Ignorant of a Master to deal with, and that themselves are the only Persons should be applyed to, to make them Sword men; this way of dealing is neither generous nor honest, and so long as there are such jarings amongst Professors, it is no wonder if the Art decay, and run into deauidade and contempt.

Therefore if I might take upon me to advise such persons, I would recommend to them Concord and Unity, and that they would be so far from contention & animosity, that they should rather have monthly Conferences concerning the Art, and Methods of teaching it, and if they observed this they would not only in a short time become cordial and unanimous, but also rectifie any superfluous or omissions which might be in their teaching, and to make the Method of communicating the Art to be one and the same thro' the three Kingdoms; for there is but one way of teaching which can be accounted the truest, and when a man finds every Master assuming that perfection to his Method and yet such a sensible difference amongst each, it gravells him a little fixedly to

determine which of them he should apply to to be his instructor, and being with their Debates thus puzzled and left in the mist, he at last resolves to imploy none of them, but to make the best use he can of what courage Nature hath bestowed upon him, and thus instead of gaining Credit or repute to themselves or increasing the Esteem for Art, they both get themselves Laught at, and the Art neglected and undervalued; but I am hopeful that for the future they will be sensible of their Errors in this as well as other particulars, and endeavour to rectifie them. I am sure it would prove both for their Interest and Advantage if they did, and so I leave them; having made too long a Digression considering the short time I have to discourse with you.

Sch. Sir, it is my misfortune that you cannot insist longer upon this matter, for by what you have said I am clearly convinced, you could say a great deal more upon the Head.

Ma. Sir, I beleive I could, and to satisfy your curiosity, and shew that I am noways nice or scrupolous, to discourse with you freely of any thing I know in this matter. I am satisfied that when we have a fit opportunity we meet again, and whatever you propose to me, I shall endeavour to give you all the satisfaction in it I can, but at present let me prosecute my design to give you some infalible Rules for Assaulting

faulting, which when practised, may make you sensible that the labour and pains you have taken in following this Art, is not so much in vain and to no purpose, as you do imagine.

Sch. With all my Heart Sir, and I most heartily thank you for the proposall you have made, which I assure you I shall not let slip the very first Occasion shall offer, there being nothing I take more delight in, than to hear things reasonably discoursed off, especially by one who can do it so well as I perceive you can.

Ma. This Complement Sir, is I am very sensible far beyond what I deserve, but least I should loose time, or perhaps fail in giving a Reply suitable to it, I shall forbear attempting one at present, and proceed to what I look upon as an undispensible duty lying upon me to perform to any Scholar, but more particularly Sir to you who have taken so much pains, and are so desirous to be informed; therefore that I may omit nothing which may appear necessary to our discourse, or tend to your further Improvement and satisfaction, I am resolved to lay you down Rules to be observed by all Scholars, in these following Circumstances: viz.

*Circumstance first.*

First, When they design by their private Practice to waine themselves from their Masters Breast, and by so doing prepare themselves for their publick Assaults.

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*Circumstance second.*

*Secondly*, When being wained from their Masters Breast they are to Assault publicly against such who are actually Scholars, or who having once been so, cannot be supposed to be great Ramblers.

*Circumstance Third.*

*Thirdly*, When they are to Assault publicly against such who have never had any Art and therefore are justly to be suspected of Rambling. And,

*Circumstance Fourth.*

*Fourthly*, When they are to engage with Sharps for their Honour or Life, or to Assault with Blunts for a Prize, against Persons they are noways acquainted with, nor perhaps did ever see or hear of before.

But before I proceed to the Rules, I will endeavour to Answer the first Question you at first proposed to me, which was, what the reason could be of your playing the Lessons so exactly upon my breast, but performing them so irregularly, and to so little purpose in Assault against your Commerads.

In Answer to which, I would have you know that there is as much difference betwixt taking a Lesson, or playing upon a Masters breast, and Assaulting or performing the same Lessons upon your Commerads, as there is betwixt the repeating of an eloquent Discourse already pen-

penned, and the composing of one: For as this can only flow from a solid Brain, and a quick Conception and Judgement, so may that be delivered by a Crack brain fool, void of all good Qualities, save a good Memory: And so are the Lessons played by Scholars upon a Masters Breast-plate, delivered for the most part, by the Rote of continual Practice, without almost ever reflecting upon any reason for what they are doing, besides that, the Master complies with, and humoreth them in every thing they are to perform, whereas when they are to play against their Commerads, instead of being humored by them, they, as they have good reason, do all lyeth in their power to cros and confound their designs and motions, which putteth young Scholars so by their Measures (for they expected to meet with no opposition) that they are put to a stand or necessitat sometimes to use Nature in place of Art, and it must still be so with them so long as they play only by Rote, and not with Judgement.

Now Sir, you may easily apply what I am saying to your self: For you may perceive when I give you a Lesson, I order you to do such and such a thing, as also that you may perform it the better, and with the more grace and ease, I am so far from crossing you, that I oftimes humor the motions you are making

And so to the end of the first Lesson.

so that strictly speaking, you conform your self and are restricted to my Judgement, and do not follow your own, whereas when you play against any of your Commerads they behave quite otherwise with you: For you find they do all they can to counteract and cross your designs, which is the reason you can scarcely play any one Lesson upon them without being less or more interrupted in the performing of it: So being by this made sensible of the vast difference there is betwixt taking of a Lesson and Assaulting, it will be in my opinion no hard matter for you to conclude upon the reason of your having such bad success in your ordinary Assaults; to remedy which I shall therefore give you Rules to be observed in this first Circumstance.

*RULES to be Observed in the first Circumstance.*

**RULE 1.**

*First*, No Scholar (according to the Laws I have set down for Schools) being allowed under six months teaching to Assault in publick, I do positively also bind him up for the first three months of those six, from any practice whatsoever, except what he shall acquire by playing upon his Masters breast, or by Parrying or Thrusting a plain Thrust upon any of his Commerads at the wall.

**RULE**

**RULE 2.**

*Secondly*, The last three moneths I allow him besides the taking of his Lessons, to practice privately (that is to say, any time except upon the publick Assaulting days) with any of his Commerads, and therefore to that end I advise him.

**RULE 3.**

*Thirdly*, To make choise of such of his Commerads to play against, as he knows will not altogether cross, but humour him in some, and oppose him in others of his Motions or Lessons: For were he altogether cross at first, it might quite spoil him, undoing more in one day than his Master could repair in six.

**RULE 4.**

*Fourthly*, In his three last months private practice, he should keep close to the Lessons hath been taught him by his Master, doing them all with as good a Grace, and with as great Stretches of the Body and Limbs as possible, alwayes performing them with Vigour, and going throw with them: For whether he hit or miss, plant or misplant at first, it is no great matter, seeing after a little practice he will certainly come to do both.

Now if this method be exactly observed, he will not only in these three last months be confirmed in the Lessons have been taught him, but it will also make him firm upon his joints, and

and give him a swift hand and agility of body, which will consequently make him the more fit for his publick Assaults at the time appointed, and if this do it not, I assure him he may despair of ever coming any great length in this Art; for six months are abundantly sufficient for any man to discover and know his own disposition, and if at the end of them he hath not made a considerable advance, he may be fully perswaded that he will never make an extraordinary Sword man, for as men are said to be born Poets, but by Practice to become Orators, so a Master may force Lessons upon a Scholar and give him form, but he can never inspire him with Judgement to contrive, or Life and Vigour to execute and perform any thing hath been taught him, this is the work of Nature, and therefore a man must have a Natural and Particular disposition for it.

It is true by a long Practice of many years a man may in some measure force Nature, and make a more considerable Advance, then in Reason could have been expected, but this is not to be trusted to, therefore according to the Advance and Improvement which a man maketh in the first six months (provided he hath plyed it closely) to let him judge of what he may expect from his Practice afterwards; yet it is also to be observed, and it is very much to be noted, that a man may be very

very well worth noticing, that a man will make a greater Advance in the first six months, then he will do in the next eight or ten, and he will also improve more in that next eight or ten, then he will do in two years thereafter, and the Reason is, because betwixt Nature and Art there is a sensible difference which is very perceptible, but once having entered it's Territories, the way becomes so deep, and there are such Lababyrinths of Invention and Variety in it, that a man advances but like a snail, very slowly, but securely, let no man then despair although after having made a great Progress in the first six months, he do not find the same proportion observed afterwards, for I assure him that although it be so very little that it is almost imperceptible, yet notwithstanding of that he is alwise advancing and improving to the better, therefore let him take Courage and persist in his Practice, and at last he will not fail to attain to a considerable degree of that perfection he so much aimed at, and for which he was at so much expences and toil; but I have insisted too long upon this.

*R U L E S to be Observed in the second Circumstance.*

Having according to my former Directions (by your private Practice) confirmed your

self in your Lessons and prepared your self for publick Assaulting, you must now steer your course another way, and as a skillful Pilote be prepared to stand out against any storm you may meet with, for as in your private Practice your play was but loose, & you did meet with little opposition, so now it must be more close and secure, and you must expect to meet with all the opposition imaginable, therefore that you may in such a Circumstance behave your self the better, I will first give you two general Rules, which must undispensably be made use of upon all occasions, and against all persons whatsoever, whither skillful or ignorant, or when you are to engage with Blunts or Sharps; and then proceed to the Rules which do more particularly relate to this second Circumstance.

*First General RULE.*

*First.* As you are upon the one hand, to prevent as much as possible all Looks and Gestures in your self, which may any wayes tend to the discovering of your designs: So upon the other, you must consider and view the person you are to engage against, to see if you can draw any observation, either from his Carriage and Gesture, or Countenance, and this may be done almost in the time you are presenting your Sword, if you once a little accustom your self to it.

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Now by this you will reap a great advantage: For if you perceive Fury and Forwardness in his Carriage or Looks, then you may in all probability expect a vigorous Attaque, upon the contrary if you perceive a Coldness or Remissness in his Actions, or concern in his Countenance, then if he be an Artist, you may expect a very regular kind of play from him, but if ignorant, then he will probably have neither Heart nor Hand to perform any thing with either Life or Vigour let it be never so contrary to Art; and therefore in such a case you will not find it very difficult to oppose and master him: So by those Observations you may in a manner prepare your self, and in some measure conform your play to what you shall expect from him, which is no small Advantage, especially if you are to engage for your Life.

It's true it may be objected, That no Man upon all occasions can observe this Rule, because in a sudden encounter a Man hath scarce any more time allowed him, than what he shall take to present his Sword; and it cannot be expected that in so short a time he can draw any considerable observation from a persons Gesture or Countenance, whom perhaps he did never hear of, nor see before.

I indeed confels it is somewhat difficult for such who are but Novices in this Art, to reap upon



upon such an occasion any advantage by it, but for persons who have been accustomed to Assault with People of different humors and play, if they will make it their business a little, they will in a very short time become so expert in it (for custom in this, as in all other things, will prove a second Nature) that even at the very first or second view they will discover something: And it is to be observed that every Man when he quarrells in an Encounter, should at the very drawing of his Sword, jump five or six yards (if he have so much ground) from his Adversary, to prevent being surprized by any unexpected motion he may make upon him, and in the time he is doing this, and advancing again upon his Guard, he may always make some observation which may tend to his advantage, let it be never so small or inconsiderable.

Also People seldom quarrel but there is some discourse or words exchanged, before they come to draw upon other: Now if the person you are like to quarrel with be one whom you know, then by the character he hath, or by what you know of him already your self, you may judge what is reasonably to be expected from him; but if he be altogether a Stranger to you, then also in the very time you are discoursing, or I may say picking the Quarrel, you may make some little observation, which may prove

prove advantageous how little soever it be: So that this objection hath not such force with it as it seems to have at first view, and before it be a little more narrowly considered, and therefore in my opinion should have no such influence upon any Man as to cause him neglect the observation of what may be so beneficial and useful to him.

*Second General RULE*

The Second is, That you never suffer the person you are engaged against, to make too full a pursue upon you: I know it is scarcely possible to hinder a Man to pursue, who is fully resolved to do it, but my meaning is, that you do not humor his pursue too much, by either altogether quitting a half Pursue (which you should for the most part make use of till you change it into a true one) or by breaking too much his measure, which is commonly called loosing of ground, for a too frequent use of either doth both give a man an ill habit, so that he cannot without difficulty forbear them when he would, and also maketh his Adversary the brisker, & encourages him to continue his Pursue with the more violence and fury when he finds he is given so much way to. And it is also generally observed that he who is the briskest Pursuer hath most commonly the better of it, especially if both parties be alike dexterous & equally

equally Masters of the Parrade, but this observation doth not alwise hold good, although I cannot deny but if a man make a vigorous Pursute, conducted so with Judgement as that he can upon a sudden alter it into a Parrade, he will seldom find any great prejudice by it, and it is upon that very account I recommend the preventing of it by a half Pursute in a mans Adversary as much as is possible, for to make a full Pursute without having a fair opportunity, were but to play at random, and expose ones self to inevitable contretemps and exchanged Thrusts, and so render Art altogether ineffectual. Therefore the only safe and reasonable Method to prevent any of these dangerous extrems, is to make use of a brisk Medium or half Pursute, which you may alter at pleasure, or as you shall be put to a pinch.

*Particular RULES for the second Circumstance.*

Having by these two General Rules layed a solid Foundation, to be used against all Humours and Persons whatsoever, I shall now proceed to those which relate more particularly to this second Circumstance. And,

**R U L E 1.**

*First*, Being to Assault publicly, and having shifted your self and come to the place of Assault, your Adversary being there also, salute him

him with your Fluret as your Master shall have taught you, with as good a grace as possible, and then put your self into what Posture or Guard you intend to play from, being sure to do both without your Adversarys measure, least he should surprize you with any sudden or unexpected motion.

**R U L E 2.**

*Secondly*, Being thus upon your Guard and resolved to make some Attempt, be sure before you do it to consider what contraries he may make use of, against the Lessons where-with you design to attacke him, that so you may prevent them, for a man who begins any Pursute without this consideration exposeth himself to inevitable hazard and danger.

I cannot illustrate this better then by comparing it to a Gamesters conduct at Chess, which Game although it differ vastly from Fencing, as to the particular manner of executing its designes, yet the reason upon which both their executive parts are grounded is the very same, for as at that Game no understanding player will offer to move any of his men untill he hath first reckoned two or three at least of the stroaks, which his Adversary can play against him, if he should make such or such a step, that so he may not only the better secure his own men, but also endanger the

taking of his Adversarys, if he upon the other hand be not fully as circumspect to defend them. So in Fencing although it be as quick and active an exercise as the other is a slow and tedious but most diverting Game, yet notwithstanding of the swiftness it requireth there is an absolute necessity for every man before he engage in an attack, first, to consider what he is to do himself, and then what contrary his Adversary can use against him, and if he neglect this, whatever he doth is but at random, and he can never expect it can succeed, unless it be by meer hazard and chance, whereas if he did consider or (as the Proverb is) Look before he leap, he would not only in a manner prevent his own ruine, but also make it the more difficult for his Adversary to oppose his Pursute, and defend himself, and having thus considered what contrary his attack may meet with, he should then go briskly forwards with it and fear nothing, seeing he already knows what in reason may be expected.

For as it is an old and wise *maxime* amongst Great and Experienced Generals, that in their Councils before they venture to give Battle, they ought to foresee all dangers, but in fighting to oversee them, that by their good example, they may the more embolden and encourage their Souldiers to do the like, so should an understanding Sword-man endeavour to foresee what

what contrary his Adversary may use against his pursute, but when once he is engaged, he should oversee them, that is not be discouraged, but go boldly forward as if there were no such thing as hazard or danger to oppose him.

## R U L E 3.

*Thirdly*, Having resolved upon the Lesson you intend to make use of, (of which you may find a great variety in my Book intituled the *Scots Fencing Master*) immediately approach upon him with the half pursute of it to try how he receives you, if you find him give way by retiring; then by redoubling continue your persute, and change it into a true one, having alwise a special care that he take not time upon you, when you are in the heat of your Pursute for perhaps it may be upon that designe that he breaks your measure a little at first, therefore have a care of it; but upon the contrary if you either find him stand fixed to receive you, or approach and meet you also with a Pursute, then notwithstanding of your continuing your half Pursute (for remember to give alwise as little way as possible) have your Parrade still in readiness that in an instant you may defend your self when he shall put you to it, that is when you perceive he will be at you, although he should do it with the hazard of a Thrust; Therefore when you find him press so hard home, take your self to the defensive

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Part, and breaking his measure a little answer him with Thrusts smartly given from the Rest; and if you perform this neatly you will find he will have but a small, if any advantage at all, by his so venturous a Pursuit.

**R U L E 4.**

*Fourthly,* Whatever part you take your self to, whether defensive or offensive, perform it alwise patiently and with Judgement, but with all the Life, smartness, and vigour imaginable, and seeing (according to the Laws for Schools) you are to play no longer than till the three first fair Thrusts be given or received, I would advice you when you are once confirmed in your Lessons, and well accustomed with Assaulting, to play as earnestly and concernedly for them, as if your Credit and Reputation lay at stake, and by doing this you will find a great advantage, for it will accustom you to the true play with Sharps, which is all done in a brush, and like Thunder and Lightning is quick and smart for the time, but soon over, making a desicion of the quarrel by the victory given to one or other of the Partys.

**R U L E 5.**

*Fifthly,* I would advice you not to use alwise one Method of play, for by so doing a man if he be any ways attentive, will after three or four times Assaulting with you, discover

cover so much by it, as will make him very near conjecture what Lessons you are to run upon, and so make it the more easie for him to oppose you; therefore use one day point or disengaged play, another day Binding, a third Commanding or Passing, I do not mean that you should use those days nothing else but one kind of Lesson, but that upon the day you intend to use point play, your play may run mostly upon that, although you intermix it also with other kind of Lessons, so when you intend to play from Binding, you may use some passing, commandings, or other Lessons, although your play for that day run most upon binding, the other Lessons being but used by as it were, to make it take the more effect; And thus observing no set form, you will make it a great deal more difficult for your Adversary to conjecture and find out what you would be at, or by what Method you resolve to attack him, then if you should make a constant repetition of the same Lessons; But this Rule is chiefly to be observed when you play frequently against one person,

**R U L E 6.**

*Sixthly,* As I have adviced you when you play oft against one Person, to alter your Method of play, the better to prevent his knowing what Lessons you are to pursue him with, so is it no less necessary for you if you intend to be a great Pro-

ficient in this Art, to change the Persons you are to Assault against, therefore I desire that you may accustom your self to play with all kinds of People, for nothing gives a man more the Judgement of this Art, and Improves him better then continual Practice with variety of Humours, this makes him to know all Methods of play, to be acquainted with all constitutions of Ignorants and Ramblers, to acquire a general and universal defence, and consequently to be prepared against all Encounters, whereas if he Assault constantly against one or two persons they come to understand others play so well, that the one knows almost what Contraries to make use of, before the other hath well begune his Pursute, and therefore it is impossible such Persons can ever make that improvement which they certainly would, were there Practice more universal, and not so restricted to the particular humors of perhaps but two or three Scholars.

And here I cannot omit to show the folly of such nice young Gentlemen who will neither take a Lesson but in Private, nor Assault if any be in the Room save the Person against whom they are to Play, as if forsooth it were a reflection upon them to be seen receive their Lesson, or a disparagement to them, to be thought to stand in need of Assaulting to improve themselves; and yet these same nice Sparks who can  
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not endure to be thought ignorant of any thing, will have confidence enough, and make no scruple to go to a publick Ball, and bungle a Courrant, Minuet or Scots measure, before a great many fine Ladys, perhaps of the best quality of the Kingdom, which I think cannot but reflect a great deal more upon their Impudence, then either their publick taking of a Lesson or Assaulting can do upon their Ignorance, especially when it is done before Persons who have so much Reason as to consider that no man is born an Artist, and that he must in all other things as well as Fencing, either suffer Instruction or remain in Ignorance, besides if such Persons knew that it is impossible for them with such private Practice, ever to make any considerable advance in this Art, I am fully perswaded they would apply themselves more to publick: For Fencing is an Art which depends mainly upon Practice, and who ever thinks to acquire it any other way, is assuredly him mightily mistaken, and the more a man practise and with the more different humors, so much the better for him, so that let the greatest Artist in the World forbear but the Practice of it for a twelve month, although I confesse he can never lose the Judgement he hath acquired, yet he will certainly when he cometh to practice again, find his Body and Limbs stiffer, and his Hand and motions both for Defence and Offence,

neither so exact, nor by far so swift, as if he had been in a continual Practice, I mean at least once a Week or Fortnight, therefore I would gladly advise such persons both for their own advantage and publick encouragement of the Art, to lay aside such shallow and and nice Fancys, and with a firm resolution apply themselves to the more solid Practice of it, and let them take my word for it, they will at last find the benefit of this my Advice, and confels it is not so much to be contemned, as perhaps they at present in the opinion they are of, imagin.

## R U L E 7.

*Seventhly*, Although Binding be certainly the only truest play a man can make use of, yet I would not have you quit too soon your point play for it; because it is point play which must make your Body and Wrest, and give you variety of play, and therefore your publick Assaults being at first as much to improve your Art, as offend your Adversary, I advise you for the first three or four months of it to play more upon the variety of Lessons; then upon binding, and use it but now and then until you find your self considerably Master of the other Lessons, and when you can play any of them with ease and at Pleasure, then take your self to Binding, and the Contercaveating parrade, and make your self also Master of them; which I

assure

assure you will be no small task, for in performing of them there is not only required Judgment and a considerable Force and Strength, but also the most extraordinary swiftness, and greatest agility imaginable.

## R U L E 8.

*Eighthly*, When ever you meet with a person whose play runneth mostly upon Binding, do not (unless you think your Binding will master his) so much endeavour to cross him by Counter-binding, as by slipping him, and keeping a disengaged point: For this is a contrary which will very oft take against such kind of play, although I confels it can never be so secure as Counter binding, and therefore all contraries must in all Encounters (but particularly at Sharps) give place to it, but it is School-play I am now discoursing of, and therefore point or disengaged play in such a case may with the more confidence be ventured upon.

## R U L E 9.

*Ninthly*, As against Binding in School-play, you may safely keep a disengaged point, and make use of point play: So against all point play whatsoever, there are no such Contraries in the World as Binding and the Contre-caveating-Parrade: for (if swiftly and dexterously performed) they not only engage the most quick and moving point imaginable, but also cross and put a stop to the execution of any Lesson whatsoever

soever, so that point or disengag'd play may as I have said prove a contrary to Binding and the Contercaveating Parrad, but Binding and the Contercaveating Parrad are the only sure and infallible contraries, to all point play that either is, or ever will be invented.

#### RULE 10.

Tenthly, I shall close these Rules for the second Circumstance, with two observations, which if well considered and Practised with Judgement, will be found most useful; And the First is, That when ever you find a man designedly give an open, or voluntarily discover any part of his Body to you to thrust at, without being forced to it, you should immediately conclude it is done out of a design to trappan & catch you upon the Respost, if you should offer a home plain Thrust at that part which he discovers to you; therefore when such an Opportunity is given you, you must not, unless you have a very swift hand offer to take it, but are either to force an open in another place, or otherwise to attaque it with a Feint. The 2d is, that a man should alwise conform both his Pursue and Parrade as much as possible, to the Art and Adroitnes of his Adversary. For Example, if you are to Assault against one who is extreemly Adroit and Skillful, and who hath a very swift hand, you would not only take heed how you Pursue him, but also make

make use of your Parrade with all the quickness imaginable, because you are to expect that he will not slip the least opportunity you give him, of either taking time or answering you from the Respost: Again if you are to play against one who is but an ordinary proficient, you may both play a little more loose with him as to your offence, and make your Parrade slower when he Pursues you.

And this is what we call the *Executive part of the Judgement of the Sword*, which no Master whatsoever can give to any man, for it must flow from his own Understanding, Fancy, & Judgement, being as I said the gift of Nature, and although it may be forced a little upon some people by good Directions and a continual Practise, yet it is at best but like to the working of Timber cross the Grain, or Sailing against a Stream, all forst work, and it is because of this natural inclination and disposition in some persons, that we see them make in a short time such great advances in any Art, and others so little, or almost none at all: And so much for this Circumstance.

#### RULES to be observed in the third Circumstance.

It hath been the mistortune of this Art, because of the imperfection of some, and bad conduct of others who pretended to it, to be treated *En Redicule* and undervalued, by reason of Ignorants having sometimes the better of them, in

in Assault with Blunts, or Encounter with Sharps; therefore it will not be amiss, before I proceed to the Ruls relating to this Circumstance, to explain to you a little the Cause and Reason of its so frequently falling out, and the rather because it will exactly answer the second question you proposed to me in the beginning of our Discourse, which was, why my old Scholars behaved so well against Ignorants and Ramblers and my young, particularly your self had so little success in any thing you attempted against them, in doing which I shall be as plain and impartial as possible.

Sch. Sir, you have now hit the Nail on the head, for this I confess is my great Scruple, which I cannot resolve my self of nor give a reason for it, and I was affraid that having delayed it so long, you should have at last either altogether forgot, or neglected it, but seeing the thread of your Discourse now leads you to this point, I am hopful you will enlarge a little upon it, not only for my satisfaction, which I must confess I long for extreemly, but also for the conviction of many who for no other Reason, but because they could never have this Objection fully cleared, do forebear the practice of this Art, and altogether refrain from the Schools, concluding that if they did otherwise, it would be but so much time lost, and money thrown away to no purpose.

Ma. Sir, It hath been all along my design to speak plainly, & if I be not deceived, with some shew of Reason, and if I fail in it now, I assure you it shall be contrar both to my design and inclination; But, *à propos.* The

The Encountering or Engaging with a forward and unexpert person at sharps being the point which will resolve all the rest, I shall restrict my self to discourse only of it; and it I can make it appear, that an ignorant can pretend to no advantage against a true Artist at sharps, but rather upon the contrary, have a visible disadvantage, then I think I may conclude, the point gained, notwithstanding of the bad success many young Scholars, or pretend-ers to Art, may have when engag'd against such persons, and this I shall endeavour to make good by answering the following objection.

*The GRAND OBJECTION*  
*Against FENCING.*

FENCING, say some, can certainly be of no Use, but rather a Prejudice to those who are Taught it, because we see that the most part of Fencers when engaged with Sharps, are rather timorous than brisk and hardy, and instead of pursuing their Adversary or keeping their ground (which any brave Man will do) they both generally take themselves to their defence, and also retire and loose their ground; whereas a vigorous Naturalist ventures always forewards, and with his full Blows and irregular Thrusting, puts my poor Gentleman so to it that he is glad to get rid of him at any rate; and in appearance, were it not more for shame than



than an inclination occasioned by Art, would show him that one pair of Heels is worth two pair of Hands.

Here is a swinging Objection, which taketh very much with many unexpert and inconsiderate People, but with how little reason will appear by the following Answers? which I am hopeful shall have so much force as to cause such persons alter their opinions, at least to acknowledge that Art is not altogether so despicable and useless a thing as they would make the World believe.

As to the first Branch of the Objection, which is Artists being rather timorous than hardy, I say it is a mistake proceeding from the want of Art, and a false Notion or Conception which such Persons have of true Valour; For if I mistake it not, true Courage doth not consist in a Fool Hardiness, which prompts a Man to perform all his Actions inconsiderately and at random, or in an insensibility of danger to which he may be exposed; But in a composedness of mind and firmness of resolution to venture his Person and oppose his Enemy, notwithstanding of his having a true sense of the hazard to which he is exposed: For that Boldness which is not regulated by Reason, and performed with Judgement, should be rather termed Brutality than Valour, and more properly belongs to Beasts than Men, of which nothing can

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give a more evident proof than Cock-fighting, where Boldness occasioned by the motion of the Spirits, is discovered to the highest degree, but neither Reason nor Judgement do accompany it, and therefore all reasonable Men methinks should disown having any share in it.

So when Artists are taxed with an aversion to Quarrelling (or Cowardice as they call it) or with a remissness and coldness in their Pursuit when they do quarrel, I would have such Persons know that it is not for lack of Courage that they use that method, but because they are by their Reason and Art, made sensible of the hazard they are exposed to upon both hands, first by acting contrary to the Laws of the Kingdom, and then in venturing their Persons; therefore they are more intent upon their own defence, than the ruine and destruction of their Adversary, whom they design also (if they must engage) to save by their Art as well as themselves, unless there be an unavoidable necessity forcing them to the contrary: And no other Reason but this is the cause of Artists being ordinarily more cautious, and not so foreward and quarrelsome as generally many ignorant and inconsiderate Persons are, which, (than to occasion a reproach and crying out against them for it) should I think upon the contrary far rather tend to their Commendation, and a general approving of their judi-

judicious and considerat conduct and behaviour: For a Man being a rational Creature, should certainly do nothing but what he hath very good grounds for, besides that it is far more easie for a Man to engage himself in a Quartel, than with his Honour and a general Applause to acquit and rid himself of it, and therefore I think it can be no Reflection upon any Man, not only to be averse from quarrelling, but also to consider well upon what grounds he make one, least (if he have not a very just cause) he make not only Law, but perhaps an intimate Commerad his irreconcilable Enemies.

However, I confels this warriness and circumspetness which is enjoined to Artists in case of an engagement, is by many young Sword Men (both to their own prejudice and the diladvantage of Art) stretched too great a length: And this leads me to the second Branch of the Objection, which is, That vigorous Naturalists with their forwardness, full Blows, and irregular Thrusts do oftentimes so confound Artists, that they are glad to get rid of them at any rate.

I say therefore in Answer to it, That it is only against young Sword-men that such persons will have this advantage: For although the Rules of Art require a Man to play calmly and considerately; yet they nowayes order  
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him to suffer the forward and irregular Motions of any Adversary whatsoever, without opposing them, but they are only young Scholars that know no better, who are guilty of this Failure: For beleive me, if those persons, be who they will, chance to engage against one who is really a Sword-man, (I say really a Sword-man, because there are but too many who pretend to the Name that deserve it not) he will, I say find himself as the Proverb goes, *In the wrong Closs*, and that the Artist will be so far from yielding his ground to him, or allowing him the whole Pursute, that he will pay him home in his own Coin, and perhaps with double, if not triple interest: So that he will be at last forc'd to acknowledge that Art hath in conscience but too great odds of Nature, to be put in the same ballance with it.

And as for the Third Branch or Particular, That if it were not more for shame, than an inclination occasioned by Art, Artists would for the most part when they are engaged, rather retire with their back than their face towards their Adversary, that is in short, that were it not for shame, they would turn tail and run, is so frivolous and mean an imputation and aspersion, and so much against sense and reason, that I think it not worth my while to Answer it.

However to conclude this point, I say upon  
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the whole, that it is somewhat strange to hear persons of any wit or understanding discourse at this rate: For can it be imagined, that a Man who is naturely brave should immediately become a Coward and Cullion, and that only for having acquired a little Art, or must Ignorance inspire all Men with Courage, and Art bereave them of it, by a certain kind of transmigration? if I may so say, infusing a mean and timorous Soul, into a Body formerly possessed by a brave One; No, No, For this were to make too rash a conclusion, and to encroach a little too much upon the just dictates of Reason, especially seeing it is most evident, that every Artist hath (as I proved in the *Sword-mans Vade-mecum*) four undeniable advantages of any Naturalist or unexpert Rambler whatsoever, which are, Parrying of a Thrust, Planting or Adjusting of a Thrust, & Judgement and swiftness of hand to perform & deliver it.

Now a true Artist having those four at command, wherein can any foreward unexperienced Person pretend to have the advantage? I know it will be said in his being able to Contretemps the Artist, or give him Thrust for Thrust; but as for the first of these, I have given in my *Swordmans Vade mecum*, a clear & evident demonstration, that it is impossible for any Ignorant, unless it be by meer chance, to do it.

And

And for the second, grant he should venture upon it (but I am convinced he can be no great Artist who giveth him that opportunity) yet may he hath no advantage by it, because he receiveth also a Thrust himself, which if it be with Sharps, because of the Artists knowing to adjust, should in reason be expected to be directed and planted in a more dangerous and mortal part of the Body, than the Ignorants which is given at random.

So that the very worst the greatest Enemies of Fencing can say of Art, (allowing a Naturalist all the pretended advantages he is capable of against it, which can never succeed or take effect against a true Artist) is, that at best a forward ignorant can be but in equal terms with an ordinary Artist, whereas upon the contrary true Artists who are resolved to expose themselves a little, are not only I may say infallibly certain of their Adversaries life, if he be no Artist, for their own, which it is impossible any ignorant can be; but also, it is twenty to one but they save themselves, and they have likewise so much Divertisement by their common School practice, that the pleasure very far counterballances the toil and trouble they have been at to acquire it; And seeing that Art can never be said with any ground of Reason to be prejudicial to any man, but upon the contrary oftentimes beneficial, and also, that it is acknowledged by all to be a wholesome Exercise

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for the Body, and so easily carried about one, I think this one Reason although there were no other should be an irresistible and uncontrollable motive to make all persons of what degree or quality so ever, to have an esteem for, and to follow it; And thus Sir I think I have sufficiently answered the Question so much troubled you.

Sch. Sir your Arguments I must confess are most convincing, and I am now so far from repining, or grudging at the pains I have already been at to acquire the little I have of this Art, that I am resolved so long as I am able either to handle a Fluret or walk to a School, not only to follow it my self, but also to encourage and perswade all I am concerned in, to make themselves in some measure Masters of it.

Ma. Your resolution Sir is most generous, and I am also glad my Discourse hath produced so good effects, but as I have in general shewed you that Art is useful against all persons, to let me now show you how that Art is to be made use of more particularly in the third Circumstance, or against those forward & unexperienced persons we have been discoursing of.

*Particular RULES for the third Circumstance.*

It cannot be denied but the irregular Thrusts of a foreward Ignorant are most difficult to Parrie; And one of the main reasons why young Scholars are oftentimes baffled by such per-

sons, is because they aim at a more perfite defence then the Art they have acquired doth allow them, for a quick, firme, and sure Parade, is not the effect of three or four months teaching, but the Fruit and Product of several years Practice: And it is far more easy to hit one part of a thousand with a Sword, then it is to defend with a Sword or any thing else, a thousand of those same parts which are exposed in every mans body to be hit if he hath not a very dexterous and firm Parrade, for to wound there is only required to hit any one part, but to defend, a man must put his Adversaries Sword not only by one but many, otherways he is hit, & consequently his Parrade false and imperfect, No wonder then that Thrusting or offending be natural almost to every man, but a sure and perfite Parrade possessed by very few.

**R U L E I.**

Therefore, Young Sholars who are not come the length of a perfite defence, should when they engage with foreward Ignorants, be as foreward and vigorous in their Pursuit as they, for they will find but few of them who will be able to defend one Thrust of six, if they be smartly delivered, and their Pursutes being as vigorous as the Ignorants, it will be in all probability (as I have already shewed) as dangerous, so that young Scholars will still have this advantage over them by

their little Art, that they can defend some Trusts, whereas the other can scarcely defend any at all. And therefore I again advice all young Scholars, or others who are not well confirmed in the defensive part, not to stand dallying with any Ignorant, but to attack him immediately with a forward and vigorous Pursue, but alwise without Rambling, and accompanyd with Reason and Judgement, and also using the left hand for a help to their defence, and they will find it to have a great deal better success, than the taking themselves wholly to the defence & playing from the Rеспост, which they are not fully Masters of, and which because of their imperfection in it, not only exposes them more to the fury of their Adversary, but also is the ground of peoples reflecting upon them as being timorous, and not so hardy and bold as they ought: Observe therefore this Rule well, and it will not only be a considerable means to gain you the victory over all such persons, but also for the future prevent giving people the occasion to charge and reproach either Art or Artists with the like Imperfections and Failures.

### RULE 2.

But for persons who by great experience and several years practice, find themselves considerably Masters of the Parrade, I am so far from advising them to observe the preceding Rule

Rule, that I think they may safely make use of any other method they shall judge most proper and convenient, although my second general Rule (which was to make alwayes a brisk half pursue) can in my opinion never prove amiss to them, especially if accompanied with the help of the left hand to assist them in their defence, and make their Parrade the more certain: But lest I should be condemned for being to short in a Circumstance which is of so great import to Artists, I shall lay down one Rule more to be observed against that humour of Ignorants, which in my opinion is the most difficult of all others to be opposed, and which if rightly managed, will be also very useful at Sharps.

### *The most difficult Humour to oppose in any* **IGNORANT,**

Is when out of a kind of Dispair, without having any regard for his life, he rusheth upon his Adversary discharging Thrust after Thrust in a most irregular way, neither giving his Adversary opportunity to respост him, because of his continued redoubling, nor ever offering to defend himself, but still advancing and thrusting so irregularly and out of the line, that it requires a great deal of skill in his Adversary to to oppose him, as neither to receive a wound for nothing, nor an exchanged Thrust

if he should venture at the delivering of one, Now although it be true that a Man must be strangely wild and beyond measure desperat, before he can be imagined capable of so furious and desperat a pursuit; yet certainly such people there are (although not many) who are capable of this extravagance, I should have rather said madness, therefore to oppose it; observe,

### R U L E 3.

That if you encounter with any such persons it must be either in a large ground, where you are at more liberty, or in a narrow bounds where you are extremely straitned, and which I confess is the hardest Circumstance of all: Now if it be in a large Field or Street, you must resolve to break his measure a little, least he should inclose upon you (for you are always to prevent that as much as possible when you have bounds to do it) until his first fury be over, which will be after the discharge of half a score, or a dozen of Thrusts at most, and then making use of your left hand to prevent an exchanged Thrust, trist your Pursuit so as that you discharge your Thrust when he is drawing back of his Arm to redouble another upon you; And this is what we call the true timing of a Thrust, which when it is seasonably performed will make the simplest Lesson of the Sword not only succeed against any Ignorant, but also take effect against the most part

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of understanding Sword-men, seeing there is certainly no contrary can be used against it, therefore pray mark it: Now if you take this time exactly and deliver your Thrust smartly having your left hand ready for your defence, you will not fail to catch him and save your self, especially if you make use of your Parrade deliberately: For although such persons Thrusts be very irregular, yet they are also very slow, and most commonly given all within the Sword, for not one Ignorant of twenty can either disengage or thrust above the Sword, but they thrust all generally upon the inside and low at the belly or thighs, therefore if you be not too hasty in your Parrade, and also observe the preceeding Directions, you will find it not so difficult a matter to oppose and master him as is commonly believed.

But if it be in a narrow bounds or close room that you are engaged against such a person, so that there is no possibility to break his measure, then you must instantly after drawing your Sword inclose with a half pals upon him, using your left hand for a defence against an exchanged Thrust in the time you are performing it: So that if he do not offer to go to the Parrade, you give him certainly a Thrust, and also defend your self from an exchanged one by your left hand; and if he do go to the Parrade, then you have the fairer opportunity

to command his sword, in both which cases you will still have the advantage; But this being certainly the most difficult circumstance a Sword man can possibly be trysted with, it must therefore as I said be very quickly and smartly gone about, that his irregularity and forwardness, may be put a stop too, and crushed in its very bud and infancy, and this much for this circumstance; For to run thorow all the different methods of pursue which may be made use of by every Ignorant, and to set down the particular contraries most proper for each would have no end, (*for so many men as many different humours;*) And therefore it must be left to every mans judgement, to make choice of what Contraries he shall think most proper for his present necessity; but what I have given you, is the foundation of all, and ground by which you must walk. Therefore pray consider it well, for there is here I assure you a great dale contained in a very few lines.

**RULES** *to be Observed in the fourth Circumstance.*

Now for the *fourth* and *last* Circumstance, which is, when a man is to engage with sharps for his Life, or Honour or to play with Blunts for a prize, & when a man doth this he should be certainly almost as circumspect and wary, as if he were to engage for his life; therefore both

both these cases falling under this Circumstance, I am convinced there are such infallible Directions set down for them in my *Sword Mans Vade mecum*, that I cannot do better then advise you to a perusal of it, seeing all I can say would prove but a Repetition of what is most distinctly and fully set down in that piece.

But I must recommend to you one thing which I believe I have omitted there, which is that you would when the weather is good accustom your self to Assault sometimes in the Fields, either in uneven ground, or amongst stones, or where there is any thing of raggedness, slipperiness, or uneveness; and this will not only teach you to move your Limbs warrily, but also give you the true judgement of what distance you should play at in the Field, which I assure you is more advantageous then many do imagine, for let a man accustom himself to play only in a school, and he will find when he cometh to play in the Fields, that he will quite mistake his distance, and think he is within reach of his Adversary, when perhaps he is not within his measure, by five or six inches at least, and so all his thrusts will be spent in vain; But accustoming himself to play now and then abroad, the distance and variety of grounds will become so familiar to him, that he will not only order his feet with as great ease, but also direct his Thrusts with as great certainty and success

as if he were in a Room or ordinary Fencing-School.

So all I have to add upon this matter, is that you would make it your business when you come to Assault, to put these Rules I have given you in practice, according to the several Circumstances you shall be tristed with; and if you do not find them answer your expectation (providing the fault ly not at your own door) then never give trust to any thing I shall hereafter say upon this subject: so Sir if I be not deceived I have both performed what you expected, & what I at first promised, which was to lay you down infallible Rules for Assaulting, the Observation of which should make you confess, that the Expenses and time you have spent upon this Exercise, is not altogether lost, and so much in vain, and to no purpose, as you did imagine.

Sch. Sir, I do confess you have beyond expectation satisfied my curiosity, and it shall be very much contrarie to my inclination, if in my practice I make not some considerable improvement by what you have taught me; But before we part I must beg leave, to put you to the trouble of resolving me one Question more, which because relating to this subject, I would gladly have cleared.

Ma. Although Sir it be now drawing near to the hour I appointed to meet some Gentlemen in the Tavern, who are to enter my scholars by the great, yet seeing you say you have  
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but one Question more to ask me, I cannot think it will take up so very much time, but that I may (rather then disoblige you) venture to delay my meeting, at least so long, untill I give you some satisfaction in it; And therefore Sir, pray what is it?

Sch. *This Sir I confess is the hight of complaisance in you, but a great dale of rudeness in me, thus to interrupt your appointment; however, least I may not have such a convenient opportunity to discourse with you another time, I am satisfied to eneroach a little at present upon the Rules of Civility, that my curiositie in this point may be satisfied.*

### *The QUESTION.*

*You know Sir, in your Laws for Fencing Schools, you said it would not be amiss (for the greater encouragement of Art, and improvement of Scholars) that once a year there were a Prize to be played for publickly; I desire therefore to know what methods you would take to have such a thing performed decently, and without debate or confusion?*

Ma. If this Sir be all, it is very easily answered, for First, I would have half a dozen, or half a score Gentlemen; (it is true, there are some in this Kingdom, who have been so generous as to do already what I am going to propose; but what I am to set down, although it be fairly begun in this Country, yet it will both prove useful to them, and as a Directory for the Youth of other Kingdoms, to know what  
methods



methods should be taken, when they shall design any such thing :) Therefore abstracting from what is already done here (for this is a general proposal I am making,) I say I would have half a dozen or half a score Gentlemen who understand the Art, to erect themselves into a Society or Company, (which should be called the Company or Society of Sword-men) and to oblige themselves by a Contract to have once a year a general Meeting, upon such a day, in such a place, and at such an hour, and to carry at that Meeting such a Badge, as shall be agreed upon, and specified in the Contract, at the Subscription of which each should consign so much as shall be agreed upon, which they are to forfeit *Toties Quoties* in case of failure: As also, they should oblige themselves to obey what Laws and Acts shall be made by the Society at those general Meetings, under the Penalty of being degraded, and having their names with disgrace expunged out of the Society Roll.

2.

*Secondly*, They should choose a Treasurer in whose hands the money is to be consigned, and who is to be accountable for it, and only to dispose of it as he shall be ordered by the Society at those general Meetings, or by a Committee which shall be appointed by them; As also they should appoint one who is to Of-  
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ficiate as Clerk, and record every thing that be agreed upon in those Meetings.

3.

*Thirdly* They should empower a Committee of their number to receive such into the Society as they shall judge sufficiently qualified (none being to be admitted but such who have been Scholars) who at their Reception and Subscription of the Contract, are also to consign so much as shall be appointed by the Society (which should be done by way of an Act) in the hands of the Treasurer, as a pledge for their observing the yearly Meeting- and other Clauses specified in the Contract, at the delivery of which, they should receive their Ticket from the Clerk, bearing the Badge of the Society, and declaring that upon such a day in such a year they were admitted to it, for which they should gratify him.

4.

*Fourthly*, The day prefixed in the Contract for the general Meeting being come, and all being convened at the hour and place appointed, the first thing they should do, is to order the Clerk to ask their Votes who shall precede for that year.

5.

*Fifthly*, The President being chosen, he shall next order the Clerk to call the Rolls or Names of the whole Society, and to mark  
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those who are absent, and all who shall be absent, or shall appear without their Badges, shall be declared by the Votes of those present, to have forfeited their Consignation money, which was impignorat as a pledge for their keeping that publick Meeting, and which shall be ordered to be disbursed by the Treasurer for defraying so far as it will go, the charges of a Collation, which should be likewise provided upon that day for those who are convened, and what shall be over and above must be equally payed by the Company present.

## 6.

*Sixthly*, The absents and those who want their Badges being fined, they should next consider if they will put out any Prize to be played for that year, if it be carried by the plurality of Votes, that there shall; Then they are to resolve of what Species it shall be, as whether a Sword a peice of Plate, or what else they shall think fit, as also of what value, and upon what day, and in what place it shall be begun to be played for, all which should be carefully marked down by the Clerk, and then every one shall give in his Proportion for the Prize to the Treasurer, who under a penalty shall be obliged to have it ready against such a day as shall be appointed, which should be at least a fortnight before the day resolved upon for beginning the Solemnity, lest the Society

ciety should meet with a disappointment, and be reflected upon for not having the Prize in readiness, after having made publick intimation of it, and that People have prepared themselves for it.

## 7.

*Seventhly*, These points being agreed on, they should in the next place pass an Act, declaring that all persons whatsoever (Fencing Masters excepted) shall have liberty to play for it, providing that against such a day as shall be appointed, they give up their names, and pay in so much money, both which should be specified in the Act, as also oblige themselves to play in the Garb or Habit which shall be mentioned in it; And the money collected from such persons who give up their names and are not of the Society, shall be bestowed upon the Prize the year following to make it of so much the more value: And it should also be declared that whoever belonging to the Society shall decline to play for the said Prize, must before he be dispensed with, give in so much money as shall be agreed upon, and mentioned in the Act, which shall also be employed for the benefite of the next years prize.

## 8.

*Eighthly*, This Act should be Printed by way of Advertisement, and Copies of it affixed in the most publick places of the City, or Town where

where the prize is to be played for, and at other adjacent Towns, also copies of it should be sent and dispersed in the Country, that all Persons who design to show their Art, may have timely enough advertisement to give up their Names, and prepare themselves for it; And it should as I have said, mention the Liberty given to all Persons, Masters excepted, to play, with the day and place appointed for taking up their names; As also, the species and value of the Prize, with the place and day when the solemnity is to begin; Likewise, a description of the Garb all are to play in, having at the end of all a Printed copy of the Rules resolved upon by the Society, to be observed in playing, that so every man may know if Justice be done him or not; And to decide all Quarrels and Debates which may fall out upon such an occasion, there should be a Committee of the most understanding and judicious Persons belonging to the Society, the President being alwayes One, appointed to decide all such controversies relating to the Prize, as shall be brought in before them, who shall be upon their word of Honour bound to give their Verdict, as impartially, and as near conform to the Printed Rules as possible.

9.

*Ninthly*, Before they adjourn their meeting they are to take every thing else into their  
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consideration, which they shall find necessarily fall under their Cognisance, as whither to have any meeting or not before the day resolved upon for beginning the Prize, for the day for their yearly meeting, being once appointed by the Original Contract, must never be altered, being the Anniversary of the Society, so all things being thus consented, & having resolved what number with the President (or Treasurer in his absence) shall be a Quorum, at those ordinary meetings, they may then adjourn themselves till the day appointed for the next: All which the Clerk should carefully mark down, and thus much for what they are to do at their yearly Assemblies, or general meetings.

But if there be a Prize to be played for, then the day for beginning it being come, and the place where it is to be played for, ready and in order, I would have notwithstanding of the former Laws for Schools, these following Rules to be observed, because they more particularly relate to such a solemnity as this.

*RULES to be Observed in playing for a PRIZE.*

*RULE I.*

*First*, That no disorder may be committed by a Rabble, or otherwise, there should be Application made to the Magistrates, or commanding Officer of the place, for a Guard to keep out all common People; As also to pre-  
F vent

not a nor other inconveniencies which may fall out upon such an occasion.

**RULE 2.**

*Secondly,* To prevent a Croud, none should be admitted to be Spectators, but those who shall have received Tickets, which must be delivered to the Door keeper as they enter.

**RULE 3.**

*Thirdly,* None should be allowed to play, let them be never so desirous, but such as have given up their names at the time appointed in the Act; also the number of the persons who are to play, should if possible be evens that so they may be the more easily Paired, & those who bear their Adversaries also marked with the less difficulty; Therefore if there be an odd person, they should all draw Lotts who is to forebear playing for that year, and upon whomsoever the Lot falleth he shall have the money he consigned for the Prize returned to him, and shall therefore forebear playing for the Prize that year.

**RULE 4.**

*Fourthly,* None should be allowed to play, but in such a Garb as this following; *Viz.* A black Velvet Cap, and white Waist-Coat, Drawers, and Stockins, of what kind of Stuff every man shall think fit to be at the charges of, whither Holland, Taffery, Sartin, &c. But in the time they are playing the lapps of the Waist-Coat must be alwise put within the head-band

and of the Drawers, that so it may be the better perceived, where the Thrusts which shall be given have been planted.

**RULE 5.**

*Fifthly,* The Flurets they all play with should be of equal length, and the number three should be also the precise number of given or received Thrusts, which each player is to play against every one of his Antagonist Players; Neither should any be allowed to play against more than one in a day, because after the first Assault a Mans Vigour is spent, and being to play for a Prize, it were most unreasonable to oblige him to play against any other fresh person that day.

**RULE 6.**

*Sixthly,* No Thrusts should be allowed, nor accounted as faire, which are not given in the Trunk of the Body; that is betwixt the neck and head-band of the Drawers as to the length, and betwixt the two Shoulders as to the breadth.

**RULE 7.**

*Seventhly,* Nothing but faire Thrusts being to be allowed and reckoned, all commanding and inclosing whatsoever should be discharged for if that were allowed, the most part would aim generally more at it, then at the giving of a Thrust, which would take away the whole grace, neatness, and pleasure of the play, but the use of the left hand is not to be discharged, because it may so fall out that some

Ignorant Ramblers may list themselves to play for the Prize, out of no other designe but to see if they can baffle any of the Artists, therefore the parrying with the left hand is upon that very account to be allowed; But in case of a Contretemps or exchanged Thrust (as it is in the eleventh Law for Schools) I would have the Thrust alwise decided in the Persons Favour who was the first launcher out of it.

**RULE 8**

*Eightly,* Both to prevent Debates, & also that the Thrusts which are given may the better appear, there should be a little peice of flat sponge fixed to the button of each Flarret, which should be diped in a little water mixt with *Ver-melion*, and then it will be impossible for the least touch to be given, but what will immediately appear to the Judges, who should then interrupt that bout, and declare that such a Person playing against such another hath received one Thrust from him, which the Clerk is immediately to mark down, and then they are to engage again for the second Thrust, and when that is given, also to desist until it be marked; and then they are to play for the third & last against other for that Prize, and the same order must be observed by all the rest.

**RULE 9.**

*Ninthly,* Each Person being to play against every One, before the Victory can be decided in any ones Favours, it will take as many days

save

have one, as there are Persons to play for the Prize, because it will take so much time (each being according to the fifth Rule to make but one Assault in a day) before it go throw them all, and whoever after the last days Assaulting, shall be found by the account that the Clerk and Judges have kept, to have beat manyest, (for the Judges are to keep an exact account of who each day beateh other as well as the Clerk; to be as it were a proof of his exactness and impartiality) shall be declared to have gained the Prize, to whom the President shall deliver it out of his own hand, passing what Compliment upon him he shall think fit, after which all may be dismissed.

Thus you see what exact methode I would have taken to prevent confusion, when there is a Prize to be played for, and I am confident if it were punctually observed, there would be as few Debates, and as little trouble at such a Solemnity, as there is now in most Schools upon the ordinary publick Assaulting days.

Sch. Really Sir, By the Rules you have laid down, it appears to me that there is not the least difficultie in going about it, but you talk of erecting a Societie of Sword-Men, and your Discourse would also intimate as much, as that there were one already erected in this Kingdom.

Ma. There is so Sir, and I thought there had been but few Gentlemen such as you who follow

follow the Sword, but what had known of it.

Sch. *Indeed Sir, I must confess my ignorance as to this, for I never so much as heard of it before, and upon this account I think it the more strange, because I am daily conversing with those who are the greatest encouragers of this Art within the Kingdom; However seeing it hath been done without my knowledge, pray do me the favour to show what methode they took to Erect it? For I am extremely taken with the fancy.*

Ma. Sir you now ask that of me, which had I not a particular permission from the Society, allowing me to devulge it, I would be necessitate contrary to my inclination to give you a Denial, but seeing they at my desire condescended to the publishing of it when I should think fit; I shall give you a full account of the whole matter, which I think I can do the more exactly, seeing I was personally present at the subscription of the Contract.

Sch. *But what was the methode pray Sir that they took, for I am a little impatient I confess to know it?*

Ma. Sir, Near Twenty of us had a meeting, (to the best of my remembrance it was upon the twenty sixth of February last) where we all subscribed our Original Contract: The exact Copie whereof followeth,

THE

THE  
ORIGINAL CONTRACT  
OF THE  
**Society of Sword Men**  
IN  
**SCOTLAND.**

**T**HE Preservation of Life or Self-Defence, being that to which all Creatures by a Natural instinct are inclined; Nature hath thought fit to bestow upon each kind a particular Defence, that so they might preserve themselves from the insults of their Enemies: And as he gave to the inferiour Creatures different methods naturallie to defend themselves, some with their Teeth, Beaks, Trunks, and Claws, as may be seen in Eagles, Lyons, Wolves, Bears, and Elephants; Others with their Horns and Feet, as the Bull and Horse; And others with their natural covering, or Coat of Armour, as the Crocodile, Porcupine, Hartschen, and Tortoise. So Man coming into the World naked, and in a manner stripped off all those Defences, he hath endued him with Reason, that he might by a Judicial Reflection and Contrivance, invent to himself such a varietie of Artificial ones, as might both supplie the want of these, and be serviceable to him in everie encounter of Danger.

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## §8 The Fencing-Masters Advice,

Now as other creatures have but one life to preserve and defend, so Man may be said to have two, one of which is his Honour, for he who loseth that, although he naturallie liveth, yet in respect of the bad character he is under; and small regard Men of Honour have to him, he is Virtually dead, so that it should be his chief care and business to defend the one, and if possible preserve the other untainted; But amongst all the Defences hitherto invented by Man, there is none so generally useful, and which shows so much of Art and Dexterity; or discovers so much the subtilty of Adrois and Invention as the Art of the Sword, (now a dayes termed Fencing,) and therefore it must certainly be without debate the fittest to protect both.

WE therefore Undersubscribers, being sensible of the great Advantage this Art hath over all others, which can any ways pretend to a share in the Defense of a Mans person; As also of the great benefit all People, but particularly Gentlemen, may reap by a right use of it, And considering that the knowledge and practice of it, is by many who do not understand its worth and Excellency, undervalued and judged but an useles and unprofitable piece of Accomplishment; Do for the greater encouragement of the Art; And to excite in all People a Desire and Emulation to understand and practice so Noble and Useful an Exercise, Erect our selves into a Society, which we Resolve shall hereafter be called, **THE SOCIETY OF SWORD-MEN.** And by this our Contract, we Bind and Oblige

## To his Scholar; &c.

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Oblige our selves, to have a Yearly General Meeting upon the \_\_\_\_\_ of each January, at two a clock in the Afternoon, in

Our first General Meeting beginning upon \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ day of January 1693. And so yearly thereafter upon the \_\_\_\_\_ of the said moneth, any number which shall convene being a Quorum. And do also oblige our selves to carry at those General Meetings upon our left Breasts, and above our upper coats the Badge following, which is by us established to be as a Distinction for the Society; And shall be hereafter called its Badge: Viz.

A piece of Plate somewhat larger than a Crown, & in the form of a double Star, having a Circle within it, and engraven upon each side of the Circle a Cloud, one of which Cloud there must come from the Dexter or Arm holding a Sword sloping upwards; And from the Sinister another holding a Fluret likewise sloping upwards, which crossing the Sword about the middle shall Form a kind of St. Andrews Cross; And behind the Fluret and Sword there must be also engraven the Figure of a Man in a fashionable Garb, pointing with his right Hand to the point of the Fluret; And with his Left to the point of the Sword, Beneath which points shall be engraven these Inscriptions; Viz. Under the point of the Fluret, *Hac Recro*; And under the point of the Sword, *Hoc propugno*; And above the head of the Figure in a scroll, *Sic in utrumque paratus*; And beneath his feet in larger Characters, *GLADIATORUM SCOTICORUM Societatis Symbolum*; And in the Circle about the

10 The Fencing Masters Advice

*the Badge the Persons name to whom the Badge belong-  
eth, with the day of the moneth, and year of GOD,  
when he was admitted and received into the Society;  
Also to give our Contract more force, and that all things  
may be done with the more Decency and Order, we all  
of us Bind and Oblige our selves to observe and stand  
to what Laws and Acts this our Society shall think  
fit to make from time to time, under the penalties which  
shall by the plurality of Votes be resolved upon, to be  
imposed upon those who shall contravene.*

*And finally, we declare that we have no other intention  
or design by Erecting this Society and appointing these  
our publick Meetings and Assemblies, but the Ad-  
vancement and Encouragement of this Art, And that  
whereby we may have a fairer & better Opportunity to  
take into our consideration what methods may be fallen  
upon; not only to excite all People to its practice, but  
also to improve our selves in it, which by our subscrip-  
tions we declare, we look upon to be an Art so necessa-  
rie and useful, that it can never be either too much or  
too exactly practised and understood by any; And  
therefore with one consent we subscribe, In tempiter-  
num Floreat Gladiatura, At Edinburgh the  
twenty sixth day of February, 1692.*

*This we all subscribed, after which we  
chose our Clerk, next our President, then we  
chose our Treasurer, in whose hands we con-  
signed*

To his Scholar, &c.

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*signed our money as a pledge for observing the  
the general Contract, and then having consid-  
ered some other particulars relating to the So-  
ciety, we appointed a Committee who were  
impowered to receive such into it, as should  
make application to them, and whom they  
should think fit to admit, which Committee  
was to continue until the next years Gene-  
ral Meeting, after which the Committee  
appointed their next ordinary Meeting, and  
then we adjourned.*

*Thus Sir have I given you a short but exact  
Account of our first Constitution, and I am  
hopeful whoever hears of it, and considers the  
Reasons which induced us to it, will think the  
motives so strong, and our Design so generous  
and Honourable, that they will be impatient to  
be admitted a Member of it.*

*Sch. Indeed I should think so, for the Fancy is  
both New, it being the first of the kind I believe that  
ever was Erected; and also being so Gentlemanly de-  
serveth all the Encouragement imaginable, and for  
my own part Sir I assure you, I will take it as a sin-  
gular favour, if you will conferr that Honour upon me,  
which I doubt not but you can very easily do, consider-  
ing your present station.*

*Ma. That Sir as I told you, doth not at all  
ly in my way, but properly belongeth to the  
Committee appointed for that purpose; Howe-  
ver if you desire, I shall do you all the service*

in



in it I can, and propose it to them, who no doubt considering the advance you have made in this Art, will make no scruple to admit you.

Sch. Pray do so then, and I shall also make Application to them myself, which will perhaps make them the sooner consent to it; for I long extremely to be one of your Number.

Ma. I am glad Sir to see you so forwardly inclined to encourage this Art, and assure your self, I shal never be wanting to give you all the Instruction and Assistance I can in any thing relating to it; But I must now of necessity take leave of you, lest I disappoint those Gentlemen I trusted with.

Sch. Sir I am sorie I have detained you so long, but the great desire I had to be informed in what I was ignorant of, (which I must confess you have most distinctly done) hath made me a great deal more rude than otherwise I would, but I expect that amongst my other failours which are very well known to you, you will also pardon this; And so I bid you heartilie good night, wishing you good success, and an advantageous agreement with those to whom you are going.

Ma. I shall take care of that Sir I'll warrant you, for it is money now a days that doth all, and he who wants that may go pick straws at home, for he will be but very little thought of abroad,

abroad; However I thank you for your good Wishes.

Sch. Well Sir, I am glad considering the great trouble I have given you all day, to leave you now in so good a strain, but I'll detain you no longer from your Company. So,

**FAREWELL.**

## POSTSCRIPT

HAVING finished the preceeding Discourse, I think it will not be amiss to Answer an Objection, which perhaps some People (particularly after considering the Rules I order to be observed in the third Circumstance against Ignorants) may make, in judging that there is a great imperfection in the Art, because I order the Left-hand to be frequently made use of against such Persons; For say they, to what use is all your Art with the Sword, when we see that according to your own Rules, when put to it, your Defence dependeth most, if not all, upon the Parrying with the Left-hand; so that take away that, and restrict your self wholly to the Defence with your Sword, and then we shall plainly see, that a rude forward Ignorant will be equal with you, do your best.

**To**

To this I Answer, that seeing it is evident a Sword cannot perform two different Actions at one and the same time, that is, cannot both Defend and Offend at once, especially the Stragling and Irregular Thrusts of a Rambler which are given at a distance from the Sword, and out of the Line, and that Ignorants knowing very well this, do therefore commonly never forbear or desist Pushing and Thrusting until their Strength and Vigour fail them, concluding certainly that so long as they Thrust so quickly, we must either Parry, or receive an exchanged Thrust; And also that such Ignorants and Ramblers do alwise designe (seeing they know they can do no better) to hazard the receiving one Wound for the giving of another, I say therefore upon that account, an Artist is in such a case necessitate either to Parry with the Left-hand, or otherwise to give the Ignorant the whole Pursute, so it is only that he may become the Pursuer that he defends with his Left-hand; *(which nevertheless, let People think, and talk of it as they please, is more difficult, and requires more Art and dexterity to perform neatly, and without being wounded in it, then most do imagine)* I say then it is only that he may become the Pursuer that he makes use of it; and not at all because he is not by his Art capable, (if he had restricted himself only to the Defensive

part

part,) to defend the Rude and Irregular thrusts of the Ignorant.

Let no man then condemn Art, upon this pretended insufficiency of not furnishing a perfect defence with the sword, seeing there can be nothing under the cope of Heaven more false, for as I said, the chief Reason which maketh Artists use the left Hand against Ignorants and Ramblers, is not so much to be a defence to them (for if they be Adroit their Sword alone is abundantly sufficient for that) but that by using it they may be in a better capacity to offend the Ignorant, and by becoming the Pursuer, put a stop to the venturous and forward Pursute of the Rambler, who (unless the Artist by using that Method make him sensible that his continual Thrusting cannot save him from a wound for nothing) would certainly advance to close, and redouble so quickly and irregularly, that he might be fair to put the Artist, especially if in a narrow Bounds, very hard to it.

Now this point I thought fit to clear, both for the Vindication of Art, and also to discover to such Persons who may make the preceding Objection, the true Reason why the use of the left Hand is so much recommend in all Engagements, but particularly against Ignorants, or great Ramblers; Therefore what-

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## P O S T S C R I P T.

ever may have been heretofore their Opinion in this matter, I expect that after the reading of these few lines, they will be convinced of the truth of what I affirm, which if they are, I have my design in Writing this Postscript, if not, the worst is theirs, seeing the disadvantage will certainly at last redound to their own Prejudice, in obstinately maintaining a point so vastly opposite and contradictory to the true and solide dictates of both Reason and Art. And so I conclude, wishing them from all my Heart the true defence of both Hand and Sword, without which no man can perform in this Art, any thing that is either great or extraordinary.

F I N I S.

