

Of the Prima guard, indicated as “A”. Chapter IV of Book I.

Having shown above the four principal guards together, in figures, each indicated by its letter in alphabetical order; and having declared the cause of their names, taken reasonably from the origin of the first; and having said as well why they are the principals, and which are the others that derive from them; and having promised to show them in the context of this work in single figures, then their effects in double ones; and having declared as well the means of shortening and lengthening the line through examples of geometrical figures; it now follows, in order to continue with our intention, that we come to speak of the substance of the said Prima guard, placed with its particular figure hereafter, and principally of its defense; and, in their places, of the other three, with the additional ones. Because within the said figure of the Prima guard there is fashioned a certain fork of wood, a thing nearly out of place, which may cause any person who sees it to wonder, were the reason for its imposition not revealed, therefore there appears to me to be a need to declare the reason; and doing thus, I say that I have put it here to this end: namely, in order to encourage at this beginning, by such an example, many people to the profession of arms who through complexion or other natural indisposition seem to themselves unfit for such exercise; because even as a stick, similarly lacking any endeavor or understanding of any art whatsoever, taken thus, coarse and unkempt, from trees or brambles or whatever other thing it may be, provided that it stand so straight and firm in itself as to be able to support a most nimble hand to effect its intent, suffices and is good, or rather within purpose, to fashion a multitude of geometrical figures such as circles, hexagons, triangles, octagons (from which is fashioned with it likewise a most proportionate sphere) and various others that can be seen in the company of the four guards, inserted thus in place so that (the whim occurring to someone to make proof thereof) it can be seen that of that whereof I speak, there is no other than a share of the truth, a man, governing himself duly with reason and with art, will be able to do in this profession that which behooves him. I would have also placed here the fashion, or rules as they may be, to make the said figures, but fearing that in doing this it would seem that I wished to deal with geometry sooner than with arms, and thinking that perhaps there will still be time one day to be able to discuss thereof, and of other subjects more appropriate elsewhere than in this place, I leave

them aside, exhorting everyone, however, considering the example shown and partially explained, not to excuse themselves owing to unfitness of body or whatever other doubts caused by circumstances of nature (excepting certain impossibilities, of which there are too many to express) from practicing in this art as much as they are able, for on some occasions, they, to whom the stars had proposed an ending (using it with due reason and in the considered ways which are spoken of throughout this work), will be able to prolong their lives some time beyond the inclinations of the heavens, exchanging life for death.

Of the narrow Terza guard designated as “F”. Chapter XXIV of Book I.

And because all arts and practices, needing to come to a convenient perfection, are accustomed to verify and furthermore corroborate themselves with the examples that are proposed by them, it seemed necessary to me, for understanding, to introduce the present example upon the proposed discussions of evading blows, ceding one’s person, fleeing with the body, and of comparing the weaker with the stronger, in order to enable a man to free himself when forced or thrust into peril, so that he know how to govern himself, escaping without injury. Whence verisimilar proof will be made with a sphere placed by way of example in the following figure, because when one will wish to have experience of it, I say that placing the sphere spoken of on the ground, and wanting to stab it from whatever side with as much skill as one can, or knows how to imagine, one will not be able to make the blow stick, owing to its motion that normally faces and inclines toward the center, and even if he hits it along the diameter, rarely will this penetrate; and sooner inadvertently than through study is certain proof found of it being a naturally mobile instrument. Therefore, following my aforesaid opinion, this represents itself verisimilarly to us as a figure of our bodies, which are indeed not similar to a sphere with respect to their true material type but rather to their motion. And anyone of sound wits will be able to take advantage thereof, needing to employ the resolutions spoken of in order to offend the enemy, aware that in our bodies the same can be verified as in the sphere, governing themselves through their mobility with the dexterity and agility that run in the said sphere, whence the undertaking that is proposed must not appear strange or difficult owing to its impossibility, which in truth, as I already said, is not such, because if an insensate thing placed on the ground not merely instinctively cedes to impact and dodges blows, protecting itself from those by its motion, but rather with the same side that faces the offensive weapons also comes by its nature to deflect and send them out from its body by turning

itself now to one, and now to another side, and sometimes up and sometimes down, forward and back, along the length and the diagonal, and to every side, then how much better can our disciplined and instructed bodies do the same, in order to know how to offend the enemies and defend themselves from them according to the places, times and circumstances? And this will suffice regarding the voids of the body, with other similar actions, and regarding the admonition of having to avail oneself thereof when necessity demands it; and it only remains to satisfy the reasons for the use, in which for one's advantage one generally practices this art, leaving the remainder to the will of fortune; of which it shall not come to pass that I should discuss how great it may be in the practice of arms, deferring with regard to the effects of its powers to those who know more thereof and have proven it. And so that the alleged reasons may be understood, I say that in the aforesaid figure the weight is fixed solely upon the right foot, aided and sustained by the point of the left, although not held fixed itself, such that both form one pole, similar to the center of the said sphere, in a stance for turning oneself following being thrust at or provoked by one's opposition. Whence, although I have spoken above in the presentation of the guards of the ways of fleeing with the body, or person, I have not yet spoken of this particular detail: that being pressed by the enemy's weapons, it is shown rather almost as a true and ordinal rule to press our bodies to cede to impacts or blows which move against them while they are in a stance permitting the avoidance thereof in the manner seen in the spoken of sphere, and the reasons are the following: because if the enemy wishes to enter by force from the outside, this one standing against him, with his sword opposing, without moving himself from his first place one bit will turn his body only, showing him his right flank, and turning his hand into high Quarta would always maintain his point toward him, so that he can, as I have said at other times, collide himself into this one's sword, sliding his forward without offending him. And therefore it is seen for a sure proof that those stronger and larger of body sometimes by their own accord come to cause the smaller to emerge superior. And this suffices for one reason. But if instead when the enemy resolved to enter from the inside by force, this one, likewise without moving himself, as above, were to turn his body to the other side, and showing his left flank were to fix himself in Seconda with the point towards the enemy, without doubt, owing to the ceding to the greater force, this would cause the adversary to offend him; whereby it is discovered how the aforesaid sphere in the act of enabling itself to defend itself does so only by a turn of the body. And this will be the second reason, whence it is recognized, and for the aforesaid causes, that parrying is prohibited, knowing and seeing that nothing can result from it other than doubling the offense, because as much as

one forces oneself to stand against the sword, so much does one subject oneself to it, and offer oneself to the danger of blows, and would come to presas, to show and uncover one's body to the enemy, to his advantage, so that one can be offended by him. Beyond which, every motion or attempt that this one makes, or tries, would give more time to the enemy to make and employ more plans against him. But alternately, resolving oneself as above to turn one's body, one would come all in one stroke to prevent him and anticipate the advantage, interrupting all his plans, and through this effect the motions would be equal between both, therefore rendering null and vain those of the enemy, whereas this one's, for the reasons spoken of, would be fully realized, it being seen that all the inclination of the body and spirit, poised only on one foot, is maximally directed in such fashion as to be guided in the briefest possible time to defend oneself from the enemy and offend him. Because one would indeed not be of that same speed and quickness, were one lying with the weight fixed upon both feet, to move from which would require some pause, whereas in the aforesaid stance it would not take more than half the time, it being a true rule of this art that one who plots or deliberates and wishes to strike his enemy, desiring to harm him markedly, gathers himself and following the swiftness of his spirit allocates and arranges the faculties of his body in such fashion that they are all always unifiedly disposed, arranged, and quick, when the occasion is seen to be reached, without losing a bit of time, as the aforesaid figure shows in part. And yet if some wished to reply, saying that the opposition of the swords would be of little impediment, as I said above, because without procrastinating in such opposition, the enemy could provoke this one in various other ways, either by feinting or by thrusting deliberately toward him, and offend him, or by similar resolutions, yet would I respond that he would avail himself of the other remedies which have already been spoken of previously in this work, and will be copiously spoken of subsequently.

Chapter XV of Book II (on the cape).

Following, therefore, the rule already promised in the beginning of our discussion, I come to speak now of the embrace of the cape with the dagger, although to everyone it will appear the simplest thing, and perhaps superfluous to discuss thereof; for, it appearing good to me, and not out of place, I say that whatsoever person wanting to provoke another, or being provoked to combat wherever it may be, and finding himself with the sword and the dagger, and the cape, he must, for his best, observe this rule of putting hands to weapons: first, extending his right arm so much that the cape flows down from

his shoulder, at the same time he will put one hand to his sword, and the other to his dagger, placing himself in guard C, because going into A he could drop the cape to the ground, and going into other guards, could not so well perform the effect that is spoken of now. Then immediately upon having drawn the sword and dagger, he will lift his cape from his shoulder with his dagger hand, with his thumb on the outer face of the collar, bending his body back a little toward the left side and extending his arm, and making a certain short wave with the said cape, and rotating his dagger hand to the outside, so far from his thigh that it will not be possible to harm himself with the point, he will thereby have embraced the cape with the dagger, in such a way as is left to be illustrated by the present figures. And this embrace I hold to be better than to have the dagger alone or the cape alone, because some would sooner have the dagger than the cape, and others the cape than the dagger, regarding each of these good by themselves alone; therefore it reasonably must be better to have them both.