



THE RAYMOND J. LORD

COLLECTION OF HISTORICAL COMBAT TREATISES
AND FENCING MANUALS

In Conjunction with the Massachusetts Center for Renaissance Studies



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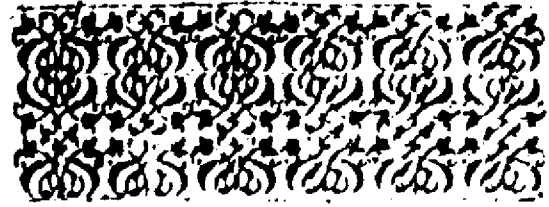
John THE Alchorn
Priuate Schoole
of Defence.

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

TOGETHER
VVith the **true** pra^rctise of the
Science, set downe in iudicious
Rules and Obseruances; in a
Method neuer before
expressed.

By G. H. Gent.

L O N D O N:
Printed for Iohn Helme, and are to be
sould at his Shop in S. Dunstons
Church-yard in Fleetstreet. 1614.



TO
THE HOPE
OF GREAT
Brittaine, Prince
CHARLES.



*Raise is the end of
all Arts, the per-
fection of Pr. is
only in Eminence,
which begets Ex. and Ad-
miration. Seeing then* *great*

The Epistle

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

Dedicatoric.

or reduce their doing to any certaintie of principle.

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

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

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

Dedicatorie.

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

as

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

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

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

Dedicatorie.

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

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

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

Pardon my tedious discourse,
(most

Dedicatorie.

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

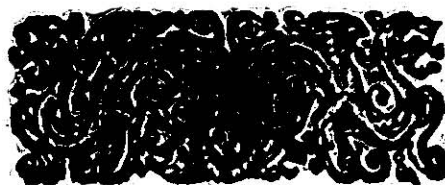
The Epistle, &c.

*in your command, in all humble
service, be ever at attendance to
make good, resting*

The most devoted

Servant to you and
your Princely Vertues,

G. H. Gent.



THE
Private Schoole of
Defence.

THE INDUCTION.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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a madde man is vncapable of it ?

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

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

To exemplifie this, you may read

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

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

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

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

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

B 3 or



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

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

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

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

Vnder

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

To

of Defence.

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

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

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both

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both without hurt, and at the last were both, at one *Passage*, runne through and slaine, leauing no place to Iudgement, that could giue preeminence to eyther: where-vpon it became a Prouerbe in Tri-als of equalitie, *Bithus contra Bac-chum*. But I haue digrest too farre *In magnis rebus voluisse sat est*; In high matters it shall suffice to sit in *Ibabus* Chayre, though wee can-not runne his full dayes iourney: wherefore wee returne againe to handle the parts deriued, which make to approue our Definition; the *Eye* and the *Foote*.

That which wee call *Strength*, is not onely a Bucke-beating abilitie of the arme; for the point, to which a'l vie of weapon is now with great reason reduced, is not so blunt but small force makes it enter: nei-ther in *Longe* or *Passage* is the force required

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

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

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occasion, some open way to greater advantage: for upon every sleigh baring of the arme, it is better to make offer of hurt to that part, then put home: for such prof-fer many times draws the aduer-ſary to a Guard, that neglects a place of more deadly danger. Last-ly, *Time* and *Place* may both ſuc-ceede to your wilhes, yet *Diſtance* may juſtly checke your reſolution: for to no obſervation more then this is the *iudgement* required, which being from our purpoſe to ſet downe a figure, I referre you to the laborious worke of *Giovan de Graſſi*, the Italian, who handles this point at large, and hath tooke vp much ground in the expreſſion thereof.

Thus much for our ſpeculative part in this Science, wherein I know none can diſagree with me: which

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could not omit to ſet downe, be-cause it makes to the honour of the worthy Profeſſors of this Science, whom I deſire the courteous Rea-der by no meanes to imagine that I am ſo ignorant to meane, where any queſtion is made of their ſuf-ſiciencie in this Booke: for I dare boldly affirme, for generall Wea-pons no Country can afford more able and ſufficient profeſſors then this our owne in their perfor-mance; whoſe teaching I will not diſpraiſe, if it come not within compaſſe of theſe following Taxa-tions, which by way of Obiection and Reſolution, I preſume, I have made apparantly worthy of cenſure to all indifferent practiſers.


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RESOLUTION.

HEE that shall teach a strong man with a single weapon to runne *Passages* with shift, takes from him the advantage of his strength, who should eyther attend the *Close*, or having length to his strength, should standing offend to the nearest, as in this Booke you shall finde vnder the title *Order for fight*. Or hee that shall teach a weake man *single weapon* or *binding Passage* for the *Close of advantage*, forfeites him to a strong mans mercy, though he hath much lesse courage or skill. Whereby the defect in the *Obiection* plainly appears, as in many other, rising from this example.

Obiection



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

OBJECTION I.

Most of the common Teachers use but one forme of *play*, and teach all men alike without observing the nature of the Scholler, whether he be of a hot spirit, or a cold; or whether hee have advantage or disadvantage in length, shortnesse, strength or weaknesse of arme or body.

Reso-

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OBIECTION II.

THE publike Teachers teach, at many weapons, as they give it out in their Challenges, as though every Weapon were used with severall Guards and Defences, one contrary to another.

RESOLUTION.

THis is meere deceit, to blinde the eyes of their Spectators in publicke, as they doe their Schollers in priuate: for all mentioned in the defect are contayned in two weapons, that is single Rapier and Quarter-staffe, and their defences, as you shall finde in the rules of Practise.

Obiect.

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OBIECTION III.

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

RESOLUTION.

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

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

OBJECTION IIII.

THE publike Professors of this science, teach nothing at Backe-sword, and Sword and Dagger, but the bare blow.

RESOLUTION.

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

of Defence.

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

OBJECTION V.

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

RESOLUTION.

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

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OBJECTION VI.

They will suffer their Schollers
so see one anothers practise, and
likewise they themselves will discover
every mans play to any man.

RESOLUTION.

TO let any man see anothers
practise, giueth much aduan-
tage to the spectator, and is much
preiudiciall vnto him whose pra-
ctise is seene: and most murthe-
rous and damnable in the Teacher
to betray their owne Schollers to
death.

OBJECTION VII.

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

of Defence.

guard good to morrow they used ye-
sterday.

RESOLUTION.

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

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

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monstration of their Teachers.

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

Order in fight.

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

of Defence.

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

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

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Strength, let him offend to the highest parts, otherwise answer.

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

To help the length of a short man.

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

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To help the strength of a weake man.

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

A good Guard

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

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dazels,

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dazels, he can neither certainly de-
fend himselfe, nor offend you

Hee that doth practise many
guards, is most commonly con-
stant in none, and is fight that be-
lieues one most to be constant in
a good guard, and slow to put out
without great advantage: for hee
that offends is thereby the easier
hurt, and if you offend upon one
that lies at his guard, offend to the
right hand, for then you may goe
quick of and if you offend to
the other parts that lye further
off, your offence is slow, and most
commonly hath recovery, if it doe
hit or not; for a Rapier enters, and
comes not at the point doth, helpe
the offence of againe, but rather
increaseth himselfe.

Principles

of Defence

Principles belonging to Fight

Stay no longer within reach of
your enemy then you see offen-
ding.

Offend alwayes upon the enemies
coming forward.

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

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

Rules of Practice.

There is but three certainties in a
single weapon.

1 *Longe.*

2 *Passage.*

3 *Change: which you make, and
then backe to your guard.*

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And likewise three Offences.

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

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

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

And two in Defence.

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

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

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

of Defence.

short Sword against all the aforesaid advantages.

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

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

of Defence.

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

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

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

duce

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

I N I S.