



*Giacomo di Grassi*  
*His True Art of Defense*

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**Introduction**

Giacomo di Grassi's teachings first reached England in 1594, though they had been originally published in 1570 in Venice, Italy. His manual was translated in England by an anonymous benefactor of the fencing community, who only wished to be known as I.G Gentleman. Although his theory appears to be strongly based on that of his contemporary, Marozzo, he did make some important steps forward, for Di Grassi appears to have been the first fencing master to have divided the sword into clearly defined separate parts which served to help with edge blows in and parries.

**Division of the Art**

Di Grassi divides the “Art of Defense” into two parts: the True Art and the False Art. He describes the “True Art” as fighting dependent on judgement, strength, and "a valiant heart". The "False Art" however relies on brute forces and deceit (feints, falses) to win victory but can never overcome the "True Art". Though Di Grassi tries to clearly define this “metaphysical” approach to fencing, this part of his manual is short and not really clear. However, he does use this approach to divided his teachings on the Art and to discourage what he views as poor fencing.

**Two Necessary Things**

Di Grassi holds that there are two things necessary to the art of Fencing: Judgement and Strength. Judgement brings with it knowledge of how one fights and the timing one needs to properly execute fencing techniques. However the art of fencing is not purely intellectual. It is also physical. Strength is just as integral to fencing as judgement because strength enables a fighter to execute blows according to his judgement. Without strength a fighter is not physically able execute the actions that his judgement tells him are the best for a given situation. A man may think that because he knows which attack is the best for a given situation that he will be able to execute his attack, but without strength such an execution is impossible. However without

judgement a fighter is reduced to barbarically executing unplanned and “unenlightened” attacks.

Di Grassi teaches that a fighter can gain both Judgement and Strength above that which nature has already bestowed upon him. A fighter may gain judgement by follow 5 advertisements, which Di Grassi outlines in the beginning of his manual:

1. The right or straight line is the shortest (in most cases). If you want to strike in the shortest line strike in a straight one.
2. He that is nearest hits soonest.
3. A circle has more strength at the extremities of its circumference than at its center.
4. A man can withstand a small force easier that he can with stand a great force.
5. Every motion is accomplished in time.

Di Grassi also outlines how a fighter can gain Strength. According to Di Grassi, three parts of the body are very important to fighting and should be exercised often so that a fighter can accustom his body to the actions and movements of fencing. These three parts of the body are the feet, the arms, and the legs and a good fighter needs to be able to coordinate these during fighting to be an effective fencer.

When a fighter exercises his arms, he should take into consideration not only the hands and the arms that are moving but also the object that they are moving: the sword. A fighter should practice striking and not only with the point but also with the edge as the movements required to make edge blows are not natural and need to be learned so that the fighter can improve his blows. Also, don't forget to practice with both hands so that you will be able to fight equally well with both the left and the right hand. Exercising the arms will not only help you gain strength so that you can fight with heavier bladed, but it will also help you fight more nimbly with lighter blades.

To practice footwork a fighter should practice making a “reasonable pace”. He should also practice stepping farther and farther to improve his stride and flexibility so that his “reasonable pace” will get longer and he will be able to move farther more quickly. A fighter should also practice body voiding so that he can more effectively move his body out of line.

### **The Sword**

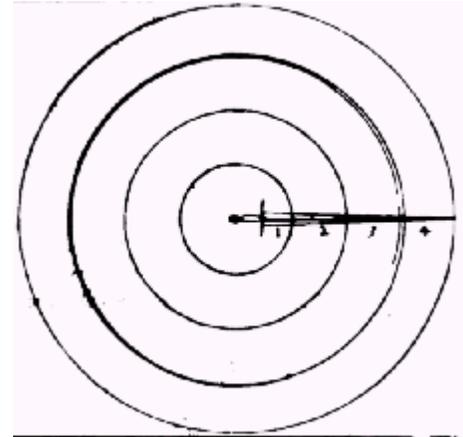
Di Grassi defines the sword as being “of reasonable length” with edges and a point. The edge blows of the sword form a circle or at least a half circle where the hand is the center and the length of the sword is the diameter. Thus, for Di Grassi, a blow requires not only skill but also a sense of time and “advantage” with which a fighter gauges when his sword is near enough to strike the enemy. Thrusting requires that a fighter stand in such a way that when he strikes his stance does not force him to loose time. For example, if your arm is too far forward, your feet are too far backwards, or your body is so disorganized that you have to draw back your arm before you can properly strike or you have to perform some dangerous motion to strike then your stance is causing you to loose time in your attack. You must be able to strike before you are struck. You must be able to maneuver your body so that your sword is closer to your enemy than his is to you.

Di Grassi's sword, when striking, forms a circle of a half circle with the hand at the center and the most force of the sword at its circumference. He divides the sword into four equal parts, each having a specific task assigned to it:

**Parts 1 and 2:** Parrying-These parts have little force but they are closest to the hand so they have more strength.

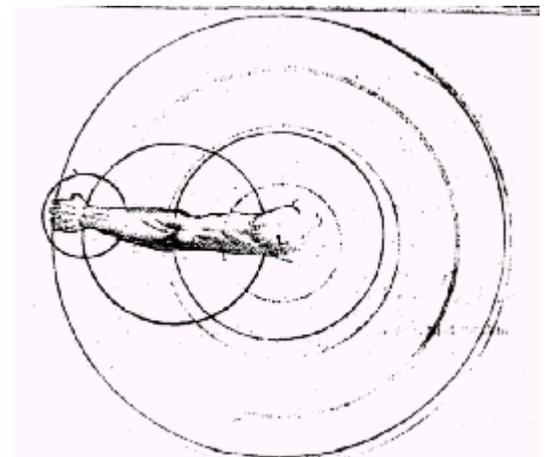
**Parts 3 and 4:** Striking-These parts are the fastest and have the most force.

\*The circumference of the sword (tip) is the fastest part of the sword and carries the most force for the blows. However, the real strength and power of the sword is found in the hand making the parts of the sword closest to the hand the best for parrying. This portion of his theory is most useful when applied to edge blows and parries.

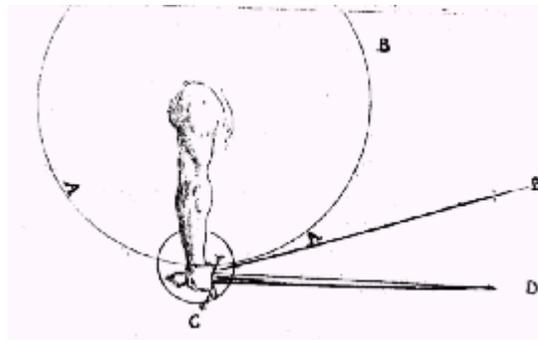


Not only did Di Grassi divide the sword into equal parts; he also divided the arm up in a similar manner. However, rather than dividing the arm into three equal parts of one circle, he divided the arm into three separate circles: the wrist, the elbow, and the shoulder. Once again the theory on which these divisions are based is best applied to edge blows and is also quite useful for beat attacks.

- 1) The Wrist: The circle of the wrist is the smallest. Because of this, the wrist is the fastest part of the arm since it only has to fetch a very small compass to move.
- 2) The Elbow: The circle of the elbow is larger than that of the wrist. This larger circle gives the elbow more strength, but it also makes its movements slower.
- 3) The Shoulder: The circle of the shoulder is the largest of the three having a diameter of the whole arm. This gives the shoulder the most strength of any of the circles, but it also makes it the slowest too.



Di Grassi states in his manual that all blows strike circularly. Because of this statement he also goes into great detail in order to explain how, if the point always strikes in a circular manner, the movement of that blow can be straight. His justification is necessary to explain how a thrust, which is a straight motion and one which he strongly recommends a fighter use, can strike circularly. Di Grassi reasons that all straight objects with an immovable point at one end and a point that moves at the other (For example the arm which does not move at the shoulder but does move at the wrist) move in a circular fashion. He also reasons that objects attached to the mobile points (a sword in a fighter's hand) move with the same motion as the object they are attached to. According to Di Grassi, the arm moves in a circle and the sword moves in the same circle as it is attached to the arm. However, the wrist also moves in a circle. Its immobile point is its attachment to the arm. When the wrist moves with a circular motion which is contrary to the motion of the arm, the sword will move in a straight line as it's movement is the product of the movement of the two objects (the arm and the wrist) that it is attached to.



### Footwork

Di Grassi believed that fencing was more firmly rooted in footwork than in anything else. It was necessary to provide balance and to help a fighter put force behind his blows. Di Grassi recommends that a fighter stand with his body “stable” and turned towards the enemy. A fighter should make himself as small a target as possible and if he must bend his body, he should take care to bend away from the enemy. When a fighter strikes he should either advance or thrust forward as soon as it is to his advantage to do so. You should always carry your body so as to make yourself firm and immovable. Don't make any unnecessary movements. Don't skip or leap. Rather keep your feet on the ground and make firm and unwavering movements. Always strike or defend in one or half a motion and be careful to keep foot and arm movements together.

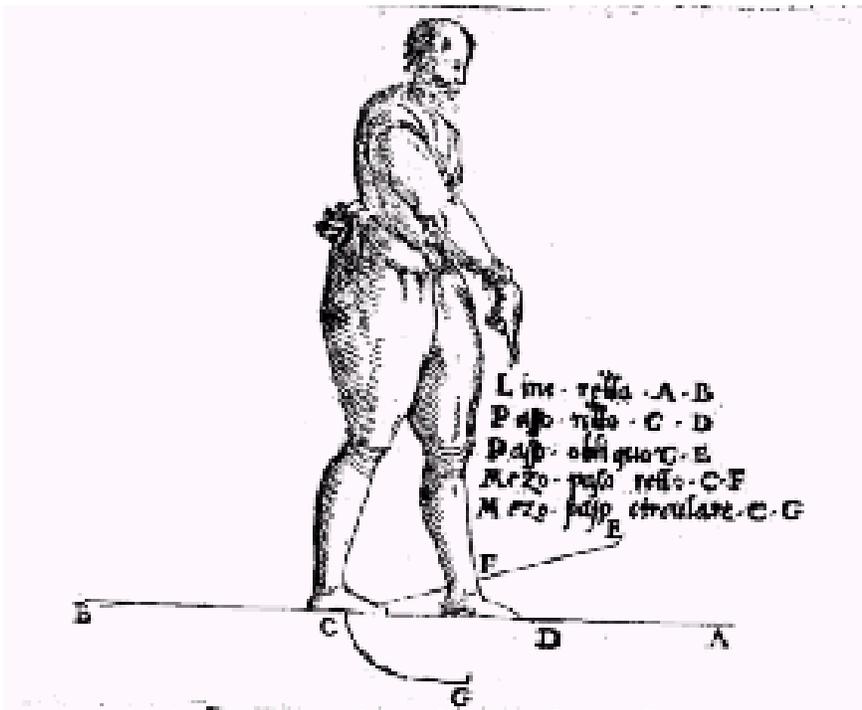
When moving your feet you should always take care to “frame a reasonable pace.” If you want to strike you should advance or increase one foot. Conversely, when defending you should retreat or withdraw one foot, taking care not to put yourself off balance or fall.

Di Grassi does not specify what distance is to be considered a reasonable pace. Instead he explains that since all fighters have different body types a given distance which might be “reasonable” or comfortable for one fighter would not be for another fighter. Thus, since everyone's “reasonable pace” will be different, fighters should take care to figure out the distance that is comfortable for them.

In Di Grassi's world, feet move straight or circularly, forwards or backwards, in a half or a whole pace. A **whole pace** is made when the back foot is carried forwards in front of the front foot without moving the front foot. The whole pace can be made in a **straight pace** or a slope (crooked) pace, however Di Grassi notes that a fighter seldom performs a straight whole pace. In a **slope (crooked) pace** the back foot is still brought in front of the front foot, but this time it is placed at an angle so as to carry the body out of line of the attack. A whole pace can also be made backwards, but usually only as a straight pace. A **half pace** is a transitional movement and is made when the back foot is brought even with the front foot and left there or then moved forwards. When performed backwards, the front foot is moved even with the back foot and left there or from there moved behind the back foot.

A **circular pace** is made when the front or back foot is moved to the right or left in a compass motion.

Di Grassi also stressed the agreement of the feet and hands stating that the strength of the right hand came from the right leg. Similarly the left leg is the strength of the left hand. By this logic, the force of a blow should come from the legs. Because of this, the position of the arms should agree with the position of the legs. For example, if the right leg is behind the body then the fighter should stand so that the right hand is behind the left.



On line AB:  
**Whole Straight Pace:** C-D  
**Half Straight Pace:** C-F  
**Whole Slope Pace:** C-E  
**Half Circular Pace:** C-G  
 AKA: Compass Step

Wards

Wards are fighting positions that can most easily withstand an enemy's attack and act as a shield against them. They either cover the whole body or allow the fighter to easily change his position to do so. Di Grassi teaches three wards: High Ward, Broad Ward, and Low Ward.

High Ward is the first ward framed when a fighter draws his sword from its scabbard. The point of the sword is turned downwards and from this position the fighter can ward his whole body. He can also launch a strong attack by gathering up his back foot and moving forward while striking above hand at his opponent's head. In this ward a fighter should keep his sword point turned towards his opponent's face or chest taking care not to have his point so high that his enemy can get in under it, nor so low that his sword can be beaten down.



The Broad Ward is framed by stretching the arm out directly from the right side of the body. This position provided the illusion that the enemy can get inside your ward but, although the hand and the handle of the sword are far from the body, the sword point is still pointed in line with the enemy and from this position the fighter can still easily strike his opponent. But take care not to move the point out of line or the illusion that the enemy can get inside your guard becomes reality.



The Low Ward (also called the Base Ward or Lock) was considered by Di Grassi to be the most strong and sure of the three wards. He framed his Low Ward with the arm carried low near the knee, directly down from the arm, with the point of the sword raised and pointed towards the left side. From this position a fighter could easily defend all attacks and also strike with great force at his opponent.

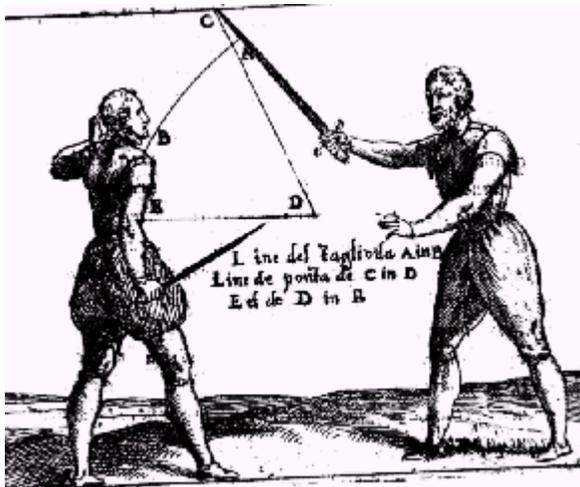


### Striking and Defending

Di Grassi advocates the use of the thrust over the use of the edge blow. The thrust can, in most cases, allows the fighter to strike in the least amount of time and for the most part, does more damage than a cut with the edge.

If a fighter would strike with a thrust, he should make a compass step with his left foot (or the rear foot). The compass step should be in line with the fighter's thrust like the "diameter in the middle of a circle". The fighter should finish his thrust by moving the rear foot a half pace forward. This half pace will add strength to the blow and make it longer.

Even though Di Grassi is a clear proponent of the thrust, there are instances where he advocates the use of an edge blow over a thrust. In these cases the edge blow is the preferred attack because it can be made in fewer motions than a thrust. For example, if your point were off line, it would take two motions to attack your enemy with a thrust: one motion to bring the point back in line (C-D) and a second motion to strike (D-E). Such an attack wastes time. Rather than executing a thrust from this position (point off line) the fighter should execute an edge blow because, unlike the thrust in this instance, it can be executed in one motion (A-B).



One Time: A-B (Edge blow)

Two Times: C-D & D-E (Thrust)

## Defense

Di Grassi outlines three ways a fighter can defend himself from an attack. The first is to oppose your opponent's blow with your sword, or in other words, parry his attack. Take care when parrying not to draw your sword back. If you do you will end up parrying with the 3 or 4 portion of your sword. Neither of these divisions of the sword is strong enough to oppose your opponent's blow and you will not withstand the attack well. When you parry you should oppose your opponent's blade with the 1 or 2 portion of your blade and advance with a slope pace as you parry (if you are thrusting rather than parrying beat your opponents blade as you make your slope pace). From your new position you have just successfully parried his weapon, voided your body out of line, and brought yourself closer to your opponent and your are now in an excellent position to attack. If you want to attack after your parry, draw your sword back and advance, but take care not to withdraw your sword too far or you run the risk of allowing you opponent too much time to strike or defend.



The second way of defending yourself is used in the context of an edge blow attack. If your opponent moves to strike you with an edge blow, attack him with a thrust before he can strike you. If your opponent sees your thrust coming he may end his attack and draw his sword back to defend himself.

The third method of defense is to void your body out of line of his attack. However, Di Grassi cautions that this manner of defense is not usually performed alone, but rather is generally used in conjunction with one of the other methods of defense.

## The Weapons Forms

### Single Rapier

#### Attacking in High Ward

The main attack, and generally the first, while in high ward, is made by thrusting over hand in a straight line and ending your attack in low ward. Don't forget to draw

your rear foot near your front foot while delivering the blow to increase the force of your attack. This attack allows no time for the enemy to get inside your ward.

You can also execute a right or reverse edge blow at your opponent's head. However, the compass needed to strike with an edge blow moves the point off line by almost a sword length, which gives your opponent plenty of time and room to get inside your ward.

If your attack does not strike your opponent, continue your attack by striking with a right edge blow at your opponent's head while moving in a compass step with the rear foot towards the right to increase the length of your attack. If this attack is also voided, strike from your new position with a reverse edge blow while advancing with a slope pace of the rear foot and draw your sword against your enemy to make the blow stronger.

#### Defending against attacks from High Ward

The best ward from which to defend yourself from attacks in high ward is low ward. While in this ward you should parry his weapon with the outside edge of your weapon while advancing with a slope pace of the back foot. Pass your enemy on his right hand side making sure to keep your sword point towards him. In this position your enemy will either run himself onto your blade or come well within your range.

To defend yourself from edge blows (which move in a circle) thrust underneath the edge blow. If a right edge blow is thrown parry his weapon with the edge of your own and thrust at your enemy's face while executing a compass step to lengthen your attack.

#### Attacking in Broad Ward

From broad ward, thrust under hand by drawing the rear foot close to the front foot and executing the attack while continuing to advance the rear foot. End your attack in low ward. You can also attack with a right edge blow executed from the wrist while advancing the right foot. This attack should also be ended in low ward.

The reverse edge blow, however, is very dangerous from this position and should only be executed while the fighter is out of line of his opponent's attack and in a position where only he can attack safely.

#### Defending against Broad Ward

Once again Di Grassi stresses the use of low ward for defense. While in this ward the enemy can not easily defend himself or get inside his opponent's ward. From this ward a fighter can protect himself from downward right and reverse edge blows with a thrust or by parrying the enemy's sword with his edge and riposting with a reverse edge blow of his own aimed at the enemy's face. While executing the edge blow, a fighter should execute a slope pace towards the right taking care to end his attack in the broad ward. If your enemy moves his point out of line because he is forced to move in a compass step, make a straight pace and thrust underneath his sword while holding his sword with your left hand. The thrust underneath can be defended against as a fighter would defend against a right edge blow.

### Attacking in Low Ward

From this ward Di Grassi says that a fighter can execute a thrust of an edge blow but that it's greatest benefit is that it allows the fighter to easily defend a high or low attack. He cautions that a fighter in low ward should not be the first in a fight to execute an edge blow as it would give the enemy too much time to attack. Similarly the fighter should only execute a thrust if he intends to be the first to attack. If your thrust is warded then the fighter should advance in a straight pace forward and execute a thrust with the sword lifted and his point between the enemy's arm and body.

### Defending against Low Ward

Since Di Grassi believes that the reverse and right edge blows are incredibly easy to defend against from low ward he does not bother to talk about them. Rather, he only concerns himself with defending against thrusts from low ward. He suggests that a fighter beat the thrust inwards and execute a compass step to the right with the rear foot. As soon as he has beat his opponent's sword he should turn his hand and execute a reverse edge blow to cut his enemy's face while carrying his front foot always on the side that his hand is. If his attack is beaten outwards by his enemy, he should execute a slope step forwards and attack with a thrust while advancing with a straight pace.

### Rapier and Dagger



For Di Grassi, one of the greatest assets of this weapons form is that with the dagger you can both strike and defend at the same time as you know have not only two weapons, but two offensive weapons that are both capable of attacking. It is also less dangerous to attack with an edge blow from the dagger since you do not have to move the point so far off line.

Di Grassi assigns both the sword and the dagger their own areas of the body to defend. He says that the dagger, since it is shorter, should be used to defend the entire left side of the body down to the knee. The longer sword should be used to defend not only the entire right side of the body but also the left side of the body from the knee down to the feet. He also stresses that the two weapons should not be used together to defend

bows (in an “x” position) since then you can not strike with either weapon until they are recovered which takes two times, during which you can easily be struck. You should use one weapon to parry at a time so that the other is always free to attack or defend.

The wards used for the dagger are the same three used for the sword. To defend with the dagger it should be held out away from the body with the point pointed towards the enemy. The dagger can be held with the flat or the edge towards the enemy depending on which is the most advantageous to the fighter. If the edge is held towards the enemy, the enemy’s sword can be parried with the dagger in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the enemy’s sword. The fighter should then advance a straight pace, turn his hand, and position the edge of the dagger where the flat was and drive the sword away from them. A large dagger should be used for this particular parry. If you choose to hold the flat of the dagger towards the enemy then you not only have the dagger to defend with, but also the quillions.

Di Grassi also stresses that when parrying the sword with the dagger or any other weapon, a fighter should take care to parry the weapon to the outside, away from his body. If you don’t then you run the risk of being struck as you parry the blade across your body. All blows must be beaten or parried outwards from the body so that the fighter can avoid getting hit by his opponent.

Di Grassi also offers some points to consider when choosing a dagger for fighting. A good dagger should be strong so that it can withstand blows from an opponent’s weapon. It should also be short so that it can be drawn quickly. Thus he recommends a middle size dagger since if you choose one that is too short then it may be too small to withstand blows and if it is too strong then it may be too long to draw quickly or too heavy to maneuver easily.

### Attacking in High Ward

Di Grassi explains that there are two types of attacks from High Ward: those with the right foot in front and those with the right foot behind. Attacks with the right foot behind the fighter take more time because the point is farther from the enemy but they are much more forceful because the attack is made with the force of the whole body not just the arm and hand. Attacks with the right foot in front strike more easily and only require an advance of the of the front foot but they are not as strong as attacks where the right foot is placed behind because they do not involve the whole body.

Attacks with the right foot in front (which are of the “true art”) are executed with a thrust from high ward as the fighter advances with his front foot and the attack ends with the fighter placing himself into low ward.

When attacking with the right foot behind him, a fighter should execute the same thrust as with the right foot in front with as much force as possible. Di Grassi says that he should not worry himself about edge blow attacks because he can easily defend against them with his dagger.

### Defending against High Ward

To defend against high ward Di Grassi once again recommends standing in low ward with your right foot forwards and your right side toward your enemy. In this

position you can defend your self basically 3 ways: with the dagger only, with the sword only, and with both. If defending only with dagger, Di Grassi recommends advancing in a slope pace to find your enemy's sword. Parry it away with your dagger and advance in a straight pace to attack from beneath. If defending with the sword only, advance once again in a slope pace and either parry your enemy's sword away with your own while striking his temples with your dagger or transfer your enemy's sword to your dagger and thrust with your sword. Defending with both weapons is similar to this second option except that the thrust underneath is made with the advance of a straight pace.

### Attacking in Broad Ward

When attacking in broad ward with sword and dagger Di Grassi says that a fighter should beat his opponents sword away with his dagger and thrust while advancing with a straight pace.

### Defending against Broad Ward

Defending against broad ward with sword and dagger is, for Di Grassi, very similar to defending against high ward with sword and dagger. Once again he has his fighter stand in low ward. Parrying against broad ward with the dagger only is the same as parrying against high ward and he considers parrying against broad ward with both so ridiculous that it can not possibly be safe in a combat situation. The only real difference arises in parrying with the sword. When parrying against broad ward with his sword only, a fighter should parry his opponent's blade with the edge of his own and thrust at his opponent's face while making a compass step to lengthen his attack.

### Attacking in Low Ward

When discussing attacking from low ward, Di Grassi says that a fighter can stand with his right foot forward or behind him. Although he mentions these two style choices he does not talk about the latter with any detail. He does however go on to talk in great length about the first option. He states that from this position (standing with the right foot forward) a fighter can attack "within" (a position where his sword is between his enemy's sword and dagger) or "without" (when his sword and dagger are born outside his opponents sword and dagger, which are born in the middle of his weapons). If a fighter wants to attack from within, he should advance with a slope pace and trap his opponent's sword in the middle with his sword and dagger. He should the attack his opponent with at thrust while advancing in a straight line. Or he could choose to beat his enemy's sword offline and, while advancing one foot forward, thrust. If, however, he wishes to attack from without he should thrust at his opponent's face. When his enemy moves to defend himself, he should advance with a slope pace, move to throw a reverse edge blow at his opponents legs, and rather than going through with his edge blow, he should change his attack into a thrust underneath his opponent's ward while advancing in a straight pace. Di Grassi also offers a couple of other options to use when attacking, which are for the most part simply variations on his first suggestion.

### Defending against Low Ward

Here Di Grassi reminds his readers that there are a few types of edge blows that they will have to learn to defend against: reversed and right, high and low. With a high right edge blows the opponents sword can be parried with the dagger only or with the dagger and sword together. When parrying with just the dagger, a fighter should advance, lift the dagger and parry his opponent's sword at its weakest point while attacking with an underhand thrust. When parrying with both the dagger and the sword a fighter should lift both of his weapons to parry his opponent's sword and as soon as the sword is met it should be parried with the dagger and the enemy's face should be cut with a reverse edge blow. The whole attack should end in the broad ward.

To defend against a low right edge blow a fighter should execute a high thrust at his opponent with a compass step of the rear foot to the right side.

If defending against a high reversed edge blow, a fighter can parry with his dagger only, attacking with an underhand thrust after the sword is parried with the dagger, or with the sword only, by advancing with the left foot, lifting his sword up to parry his opponent's sword, and executing a thrust at his opponent's right leg with an advance of the right foot.

A reversed edge blow, according to Di Grassi, can be defended against by thrusting, which not only threatens his opponent, but also prevents the opponent's attack from hitting his legs.

### Rapier and Cloak



As necessity is the Mother of Inventions, Di Grassi says that the use of the cloak as a parrying weapon in combat was accidental.

He goes on to say that a fighter should consider 3 factors when selecting a cloak for combat: "length, largeness, and flexibility." The flexibility of the material is constant and can not be altered. The length and largeness of the cloak can be altered, but he recommends that they not be lessened because lessening these two factors would lessen the strength of the cloak.

The cloak should be held by the collar and wrapped once or twice around the arm up to the elbow, but not over the elbow, which could restrict movement. The fighter should parry with the portion of the cloak that hangs down from the arm. He should also take care not to trust the portion of the cloak that is wrapped around his arm to protect him from edge blows. Once the cloak is wrapped around the body it loses its flexibility, the characteristic which gives the cloak most of its strength. The cloak also cannot defend a solid object that is too close to it because a sword can easily cut through the fabric. Thus a fighter should take care not only to not expect the portion of the cloak wrapped around his arm to protect him, but the portion of the cloak hanging down from his arm also cannot protect him if his leg is placed directly behind the cloak. The cloak's flexibility and the weight of its fabric combine to provide the cloak the strength and force to beat a blade off line. This is what protects the fighter from the blade, as the fabric of the cloak is not impenetrable.

Thrusts can also be made from without if the fighter is able to beat his opponent's sword off line with his cloak. The beat should be made approximately one hand width down the blade from the point where the sword is weak and won't have time to cut the hand.

The cloak and sword also have designated areas of the body to defend. The cloak should not be used to defend the upper body since its weight weighs the arm down and thus cost the fighter precious time if he tries to move the cloak to protect the upper body. Thus the sword should be used to ward the entire upper body and the lower right side of the body. The cloak should be used to ward the lower left side of the body.

Di Grassi recommends two ways to fold the cloak. A fighter can either fold the cloak once or twice around his arm while holding the collar or he can, letting the cloak fall down from the shoulder, take one side of the cloak and wrap it once or twice around his arm. However, the fighter should be very careful not to tangle his feet in his cloak, which can happen if his cloak is too long because it is not folded properly or if his arm gets tired and he starts to let the cloak drag the ground. If his feet get tangled he could easily fall.

### Attacking in High Ward

Before offering suggestions for attacking in high ward, Di Grassi reminds his readers that the fighter should be using his sword to ward his body from his head to his cloak hand and his cloak to ward from his cloak hand to the middle of his leg.

When describing high ward attacks, he once again suggests that a fighter attack with an overhand thrust and end his attack in low ward. A right edge blow should be executed from the wrist and, just as before, the attack should be ended in low ward.

### Defending against High Ward

To defend against high ward, Di Grassi suggests that a fighter should stand in low ward. While in low ward a fighter can defend with his sword from within or without or with his cloak from within or without. When defending with his sword from within, a fighter should execute a compass step with his back foot on the right side and thrust at his opponent's face. From without he should advance forward and parry the first part of his opponent's sword with his cloak and thrust at his opponent from beneath. Likewise, Di

Grassi says that each of these strategies can also be executed with the cloak. One strategy in particular requires, not only that the fighter be especially daring and confident in his execution, but he must also have excellent judgement. To execute this defense, the fighter should hold his cloak in front of him. When the point of his opponent's sword has his cloak hand by one hand length (and no more), he should beat the sword away from his body at the same time he advances with his right foot and thrusts at his opponent from underneath.

When a fighter finds himself threatened with a right edge blow, Di Grassi cautions that he should not parry the attack with his cloak if it is in a high line because he runs the risk of blocking his vision. Rather, he should only parry edge blows with his cloak if they are in a low line.

When defending against reverse edge blows, Di Grassi instructs his readers to parry with their cloak only, their sword only, or both. If defending with the cloak only, he recommends that a fighter should advance, parry his opponent's sword with his cloak, and thrust from underneath. If defending with the sword only the fighter should simply thrust at his enemy's thigh which serves not only as an attack, but will also defend against the edge blow. If using both the sword and the cloak to defend, the fighter should advance, parry with the cloak, recover his sword, and thrust while advancing his right foot (which adds force to the blow).

#### Attacking in Broad Ward

The attack that Di Grassi suggests from this ward is slightly complicated. He suggests that a fighter should begin his attack by thrusting while executing a compass step with the rear foot (to bring him closer to his opponents). Suddenly change your attack by discharging a right edge blow from the wrist and a second reverse edge blow, while advancing the right foot right after it. Continue the attack with a thrust while advancing.

#### Defending against Broad Ward

As usual, Di Grassi recommends the low ward for defense. He recommends that fighters should counter attack with an underhanded thrust to the face while executing a compass step to the right with the back foot. This serves to protect the body in case the counter attack does not hit by voiding the body out of line. To ward against edge blows, once again he recommends that fighters should strike at their opponent's thigh with a thrust.

#### Attacking in Low Ward

In this section Di Grassi cautions his readers not to use edge blows as an opponent can attack under them and they can be warded easily. Thus he says that a fighter should only attack with thrusts.

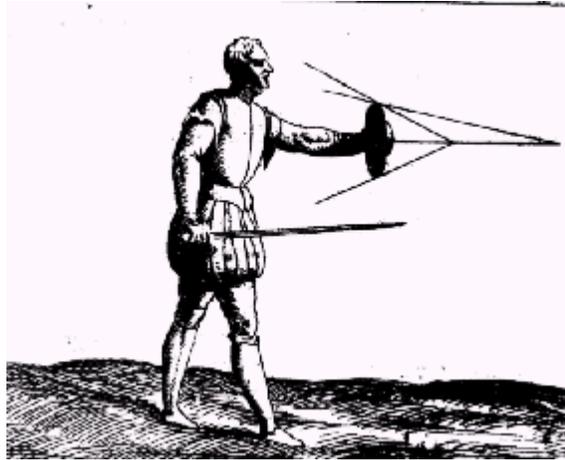
To attack, Di Grassi recommends that you should steal half a pace without your enemy noticing you have closed the distance between the two of you. The cloak can be used to distract him. Find your enemy's sword with your cloak, advance with a half pace

and thrust at your enemy while parrying his blade with your cloak. This can be executed from within or without.

### Defending against Low Ward

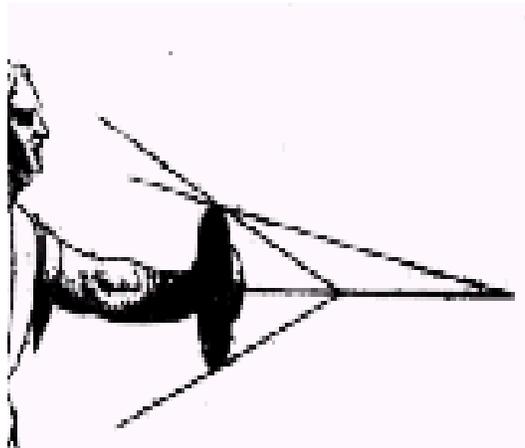
The only defense against the low ward that Di Grassi recommends here is to void the body out of line.

### Rapier and Buckler



The first thing Di Grassi addresses on the subject of bucklers is their size and form. A buckler should be small and round, according to Di Grassi. It should be a shield that can be used to safe guard the whole body. It should not interfere with a fighter's sight (or at least as little as possible). He also describes a circle of iron that is used sometimes on bucklers. This circle is "well nailed and hollowed from the buckler" so that blades can be caught between the buckler and the iron circle and broken. Sometimes bucklers can also have a sharp point of iron that can also be used to strike opponents if the occasion presents itself.

The advantage of the buckler is that it can be used to protect the whole body by taking advantage of its geometry. To do this the fighter should hold the buckler as far away from the body as his arm will allow and hold the flat side of the buckler towards his opponent. He should also move the arm and the buckler together as if the buckler was just an extension of the arm. According to Di Grassi, this stance is the most advantageous to the fighter. Since the arm is directly behind the buckler it is protected from incoming attacks. The buckler will also protect against edge blows by parrying the blade in its 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> part. It also protects the body and head because a sword must come inside the buckler to strike and there it can easily be parried. Also all thrust can easily be defended against and parried away from the body.



The buckler should be used to defend the body only on the left-hand side down to the knee. The rest of the body should be warded by the sword.

#### Attacking in High Ward

From the high ward, Di Grassi says that the right and reversed edge blows are easy to defend against, as a fighter can easily thrust underneath them. The usual overhanded thrust can be delivered with the right foot either in front or behind the left foot. If the right foot is carried behind the left foot, the overhand thrust should be executed with an advance of a straight pace of the right foot (to add strength to the blow). The attack should be ended in low ward. If the right foot is carried in front, first steal a half pace without your opponent noticing. Then thrust overhand, increasing another half pace and end your attack in low ward.

#### Defending against High Ward

Once again to defend against attacks from high ward, Di Grassi recommends to his readers that they stand in low ward. From this position, a fighter should thrust outwards and advance one pace forward. For this attack the sword and buckler should be used to parry the opponent's sword before the attack is begun. Di Grassi also says that a fighter can use an attack called the "mustachio" if his enemy comes in close contact with the fighter. This attack is executed by punching the enemy in the face with the buckler.

#### Attacking in Broad Ward

In the broad ward, if a fighter wants to step forward and attack, he should execute a thrust. Edge blows from this position in this weapon form are too dangerous because a fighter must carry his blade so far away from his body.

#### Defending against Broad Ward

To defend against attacks made in the broad ward, a fighter should parry his opponents thrust with his buckler and end in low ward. When his opponents comes to thrust again, the fighter should not parry the blow, but rather void his body by executing a compass step and thrust at his opponent.

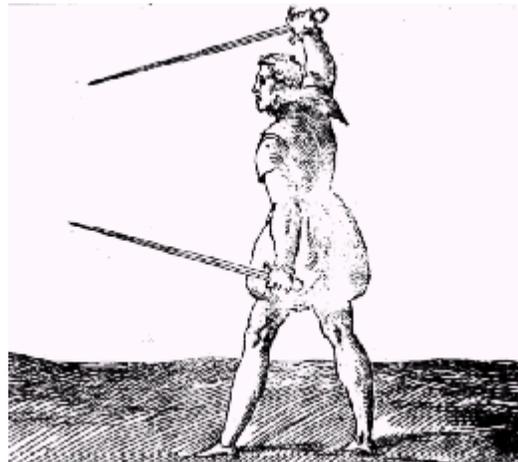
### Attacking in Low Ward

To attack in low ward with the right foot in front, Di Grassi recommends that a fighter should thrust (with the advance of a pace of right foot) between the enemy's sword and buckler (or outside his sword and buckler) and end the attack in low ward with the right foot still in front. From this new position the fighter can continue his attack from within or without. If he wishes to continue from without, he should parry his enemy's sword with his own and transfer the blade to his buckler while advancing a half pace forwards. He should then recover his blade and continue his original thrust while advancing a pace with his right foot. If he wishes to continue from within, he should attack in basically the same way, only more forcefully. He should trap his enemy's blade between his own blade and his buckler to prevent any edge blows and then continue his thrust into the body with the advance of a pace of the right foot.

### Defending against Low Ward

Once again the low ward is recommended for defense. When your enemy begins his thrust, thrust at his thigh or chest turning the hilt so that it parries your opponent's blade and execute a compass step with the back foot to take your body out of line.

### Case of Rapiers



Di Grassi talks very excitedly about this weapons form. To fight case effectively, a fighter must be able to use both hands equally well because he will need to be able to attack and defend with both weapons. Dexterity is also very important with this from.

Di Grassi takes care though to remind his readers in this section that even though you can now attack with both weapons simultaneously, they should not forget the

importance of defense. They should always take care to protect themselves from harm and parry their opponents blade before they attack.

### Attacking in High Ward

When attacking in high ward with case of rapier, you can stand with either your right foot in front or with it behind your left foot. According to Di Grassi, you should take care to hold your back arm in high ward and your front arm in low ward. You should be careful to always maintain this symmetry so that as one sword goes into low ward the other goes into high ward and vice versa. To strike, you should stand without and using the sword that is in low ward you should find your opponent's blade and beat it aside. From there you should attack with a high thrust while advancing a pace with the right foot. If your enemy retreats backwards you should follow continuing your attack which will hit according to Di Grassi because you can go forward faster than he can go backwards.

This attack can also be made from the initial position of having your right foot forward and your right arm in high ward. However you need a lot of force and power for this attack which this stance doesn't provide so it will not do much good.

### Defending against High Ward

As usual Di Grassi favors the low ward for defense. He instructs that you should stand with the same foot forward as your enemy with the front sword in a high ward. When he attempts to beat your blade let it be beaten off line. Advance with a slope pace and with your rear sword (the one in low ward) beat the enemy's thrust to the right. Then with the other sword (the one that was beaten) deliver a low thrust while advancing in a straight pace continuing to beat away you enemy's sword with your other weapon. This defense is very strong and sure. It can also be preformed with the opposite swords and it will be just as strong, but it will be shorter.

### Attacking in Broad Ward

To frame this attack, the arm behind the rear foot should be in broad ward and the arm in front should be in low ward. Parry the enemy's sword away from the body with the front sword advance with a slope pace, move forward, and thrust at his thigh. Move to stand without and end your attack with the other arm in broad ward.

### Defending against Broad Ward

To defend against attacks in broad ward, take care to stand in low ward and carefully observe how your opponent moves. With the right arm stretched out wide and the right foot also widened, advance the right foot forward and carry the right shoulder with it to void you body from the attack. If you are standing with the opposite stance, just reverse the movements. As the enemy thrusts, advance in a slope pace and parry his blade.

### Attacking in Low Ward

When attacking with case of rapier in low ward, a fighter can stand with his right foot in front or in back and he can attack within or without. With the right foot in front, if a fighter wishes to attack from within (with either one or both blades between his enemy's blades) he should simply pass underneath his opponent's blades and thrust, taking care to keep his point up and his hand slightly down so that he can use the guard to help protect his hand. The only defense from this attack is to void. If he wishes to attack from without he should beat his opponent's sword off line (with his fore sword) and thrust at his head or chest (with the rear sword) while advancing in a slope pace and ending his attack in low ward with the left foot in front. When striking from without a fighter can also advance with a slope step and drive a thrust at his opponent (with his fore rapier) over his opponent's sword and with the other rapier he should thrust underneath his opponent's blade. The only defense for this attack according to Di Grassi is to retreat, however this attack requires great dexterity so the fighter should be agile if he wishes to attempt it.

### Defending against Low Ward

All attacks can easily be warded from low ward. To defend against attacks made in low ward, not only should a fighter stand in low ward, but he should also void his body out of line by advancing with a slope pace and thrust at his opponent's face.

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